CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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Developments in Venezuela a 'matter of concern': India

India expressed concern over Venezuela after a U.S. military operation detained President Maduro, urging dialogue and regional stability

NEW DELHI

India on Sunday voiced "deep concern" over the fast-moving developments in Venezuela after the United States reportedly carried out a military operation, seized control in parts of the country, and detained President Nicolás Maduro along with his wife.

In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said India was closely following the situation and reaffirmed its commitment to the security and welfare of the Venezuelan people. New Delhi urged all parties involved to resolve differences peacefully through dialogue and to ensure regional peace and stability.

"Recent developments in Venezuela are a matter of deep concern. We are closely monitoring the evolving situation. India reaffirms its support to the well-being and safety of the people of Venezuela. We call upon all concerned to address issues peacefully through dialogue, ensuring peace and stability of the region," the statement said.

The United States is ready to work with Venezuela's remaining leaders if they make "the right decision," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Sunday.

The ministry further noted that the Indian Embassy in Caracas remains in contact with the Indian community in the country and will continue extending assistance as needed. However, India stopped short of directly naming the United States or commenting on sovereignty-related concerns, maintaining a cautious diplomatic tone.

The US administration, led by President Donald Trump, earlier announced that Maduro had been captured following a large-scale military operation targeting Caracas and other locations, describing the move as part of its campaign against "narco-terrorism".

Maduro capture signals US intent in its hemisphere

US President Donald Trump signalled Washington's readiness to assert dominance in its hemisphere after a military operation abducted and arrested Venezuela's leader Nicolás Maduro, now jailed in New York. Trump called the raid a modern update of the Monroe Doctrine, jokingly renaming it the "Donroe document". He said American dominance in the Western Hemisphere would never again be questioned.

Faridabad Horror: Woman Assaulted in Ambulance

FARIDABAD

A shocking new detail has emerged in the Faridabad gang-rape case, with police confirming that the 25-year-old woman was assaulted inside a private hospital's ambulance, not a van as initially reported. According to investigators, the two accused, who worked as a driver and helper with the ambulance service, allegedly offered the woman a lift near Metro Chowk around midnight while she was returning home after visiting a friend in Sector 23. Instead of taking her to her destination, they drove towards Gurugram, locked the vehicle, snatched her phone, and reportedly raped her as the city lay covered in dense fog.

The accused later dumped her near Raja Chowk around 3 am on Tuesday. The survivor, who remains hospitalised six days after the incident, is yet to undergo an identification parade, which will be conducted once her condition improves. Both accused hail from Uttar Pradesh—one from Mathura and the other from Jhansi—and have been arrested and sent to judicial custody. A purported video of the survivor narrating the ordeal has surfaced, though police have not verified its authenticity. Authorities have assured further investigation, including questioning the accused again on production warrants.

Achieving inclusive devpt is our goal: CM Siddaramaiah

BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, inaugurating the centenary celebrations of the Devang Sangh in Bengaluru, emphasized the need for inclusive development and community organization. Addressing the gathering, he urged all sub-castes within the Devang community to unite, stating that organizing without dividing by sub-caste strengthens the community and prevents social fragmentation. He highlighted that the Sangh's century-long efforts in education, including providing student hostels and facilities, are significant milestones for the welfare of the Devang people.

The Chief Minister underscored the importance of women's empowerment, noting that marginalized groups historically lacked access to literacy and education. He assured government support for the construction of women's hostels and encouraged the community to overcome gender disparities. Siddaramaiah stressed that the Devang community, with a rich history but socially and economically backward, must organize itself to harness its collective strength. Education, organization, and struggle are key to achieving social equality, he added, referencing Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision that freedom—social, economic, educational, and political—is essential for an equitable society.

"When marginalized communities come together in unity, caste divisions lose significance. Organize as one strong, undivided force"
—Siddaramaiah, K'taka CM

He also cited past government initiatives for artisans, recalling the 2004–05 reduction in electricity tariffs from ₹4.20 per unit to ₹1.20, benefiting 80% of the community, along with current measures including subsidized electricity, zero-interest loans up to ₹5 lakh, and schemes honoring artisans and poets. The CM affirmed the government's commitment to continuing land allotments and other welfare measures for backward classes. He urged community members to pursue their rights through education, unity, and active participation in social development, fostering tolerance and cooperation across all castes and religions.

'Ballari SP is being used as a scapegoat'

BALLARI

Leader of the Opposition R. Ashoka accused the Congress government of creating a hostile environment for officials and making Ballari SP Pavan Nejjur a scapegoat for the recent violence in Ballari. He noted that Nejjur had assumed charge just two hours before the incident and that it typically takes 15–20 days to familiarize oneself with a new district.

Ashoka drew a parallel with the suspension of Bengaluru Police Commissioner B. Dayanand after the RCB IPL stampede that claimed 11 lives, arguing that the government was taking selective action. He said that if the SP could be suspended within hours, the Home Minister, G. Parameshwara, and Ballari district in-charge Minister BZ Zameer Ahmad Khan should also face suspension.

Ashoka further alleged that government pressure had driven several officials to suicide, citing twelve such cases, and claimed the administration delivers a "suicide guarantee" to officers. Regarding Thursday's clashes, he asserted that Congress workers fired the shots, accidentally killing a party worker while intending to target Janardhana Reddy, and questioned what an SP could do without proper knowledge of the district.

Senior Karnataka police officials denied unverified reports of Nejjur attempting suicide after his suspension. Home Minister G. Parameshwara also dismissed these claims when asked by the media, reaffirming that there was no truth to the suicide rumors.

QUICK READ

Human rabies to be declared notifiable disease

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government is set to declare human rabies a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act to strengthen surveillance and ensure timely treatment. Health Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh said the move aligns with the government's goal of achieving zero human deaths from rabies. Once notified, all government and private healthcare facilities will be mandated to report suspected, probable and confirmed cases to health authorities. The decision comes amid a debate over the Supreme Court's directions on managing stray dogs following reports of dog attacks and rabies deaths.

Govt considering handing Ballari clash case to CID: HM

BENGALURU

The Karnataka government is mulling handing over the probe into the recent violent clashes in Ballari, in which one person was killed, to the CID, Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Sunday.

The clashes were triggered by a dispute over tying a banner near BJP MLA G Janardhana Reddy's residence and violence broke broke out between the supporters of the BJP legislator and Congress MLA Nara Bharath Reddy on January 1. A Congress worker was killed.

"I had said this before, the guns of the gunmen hired for private security have been seized. Now the ballistic expert's report will reveal from which gun it was fired. I have told the Forensic Science Laboratory officials to give an investigation report. The process is on. The ADGP had told me that the firing didn't happen with a police gun," Parameshwara told reporters.

When asked whether the case would be handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) or a special investigation team (SIT), the Home Minister said the option was under consideration. "We are also mulling it. There are possibilities of giving the matter to the CID. I will speak to CM Siddaramaiah. If need be then we will do it," he said.

26 arrested in Ballari banner clash case

Police have arrested 26 people and filed 6 FIRs in connection with the violent clash that broke out on Thursday night in Ballari's Havambavi area over a banner installation dispute, which led to the death of Congress worker Rajashekhar. The arrested accused have been identified as Karthik, Mukkal, Inayathulla, Raju, Mustafa, Srikanth, Muhammad Rasool, Babu, Venkatesh and Mabasha.

Karandlaje accuses govt of hiding SP's 'death note'

Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje launched a sharp attack on the Karnataka government over the Ballari clash case, alleging that suspended Ballari SP Pavan Nejjur had written a "death note" before his reported suicide attempt and questioned why the government was suppressing it. Addressing the media at the BJP office, she accused the government of shielding Congress MLA Bharat Reddy and questioned why action had not been taken against him despite serious allegations.

Goa nightclub fire: Victims' kin protest at Jantar Mantar

NEW DELHI: Families of those killed in the Goa nightclub fire staged a protest at Jantar Mantar on Sunday, demanding the death penalty for the owners of the club where the tragedy occurred. Raising slogans such as "hang the killers", the protesters held brothers Saurabh Luthra and Gaurav Luthra responsible for the blaze that claimed 25 lives and left dozens injured. Carrying photographs of the victims, the families said justice must be delivered not only for those who lost their lives but also for the survivors who continue to suffer physical and psychological trauma.

Indore water crisis a corruption disaster, says Rajendra Singh

"Indore's contaminated drinking water crisis is a system-created disaster. To save money, contractors lay drinking water pipelines close to drainage lines.
—Rajendra Singh, Water conservationist

INDORE

Water conservationist Rajendra Singh, popularly known as the 'Waterman of India', has termed the Indore water contamination tragedy a "disaster created by a corrupt system". He said the deaths caused by polluted drinking water in the city reflect deep administrative negligence and alleged corruption in civic infrastructure. If such an incident can occur in Indore, often celebrated as India's cleanest city, the situation in other regions could be far worse, he warned. Singh alleged that to cut costs, contractors frequently lay drinking water pipelines dangerously close to drainage lines, leading to serious risks of contamination. According to him, such careless planning and corruption have destroyed the reliability of the drinking water supply system.

Red Fort blast: Accused used 'ghost' SIM cards

NEW DELHI

Investigations into the "white-collar" terror module linked to the blast near Delhi's Red Fort on November 10 last year show that highly educated doctors used a sophisticated web of "ghost" SIM cards and encrypted apps to coordinate with Pakistani handlers, officials claimed on Sunday.

The outcome of the investigations essentially formed the basis for the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) to issue a sweeping directive on November 28 last year, mandating that app-based communication services like WhatsApp, Telegram and Signal must be continuously linked to an active, physical SIM card within the device.

The officials said the probe into the "white-collar" terror module and the blast led to a web of "ghost" SIM cards being used by the arrested doctors, including Muzammil Ganaie, Adeel Rather and others, as part of a tactical "dual-phone" protocol to evade security agencies.Each accused, including Dr Umar-un-Nabi, carried two to three mobile handsets, they said.

ODISHA QUARRY TRAGEDY

Two killed in rock collapse at illegal Odisha stone quarry

BHUBANESWAR

At least two persons were killed after rocks collapsed at an unauthorised stone quarry in Odisha's Dhenkanal district, officials said on Sunday. The incident took place on Saturday evening when some workers were engaged in drilling and exploration of stone from the quarry located near Gopalpur village under Motanga police station limits in the district, they said.

The exact cause behind the incident is not yet clear. Teams of the local fire service, Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF), along with a dog squad were engaged in rescue operations, an officer said. Dhenkanal Collector Ashish Ishwar Patil and SP Abhinav Sonkar have reached the spot to supervise the rescue operation.

"As per available information, only two persons were there, and two bodies were recovered. One person belonged to Balasore district, while another deceased was from either Keonjhar or Mayurbhanj district. Their identities have not yet been established," Patil told reporters.

Blasting permission at the stone quarry expired in September while its lease period ended in December 2025, he said. "We will take legal action against the mine lease holder as blasting and mining continues at the quarry after expiry of the lease period," Patil said.

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik, in a post on X said, "I am deeply saddened to learn that workers lost their lives due to a rockfall following an explosion in a stone quarry in Dhenkanal. At this sorrowful time, I convey my deepest condolences to the family members, along with prayers for the eternal peace of the departed souls.

Patnaik also called for a thorough investigation into the circumstances leading to the collapse.

Khandre inaugurates Integrated Command Centre

The state government has taken a new step to control human-wildlife conflict, for this, it has resorted to technology

BENGALURU

Forest Minister Ishwar Khandre inaugurated the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) along with Regional Control Centres in seven divisions at the Forest Building, a major initiative aimed at managing human-wildlife conflict across the state.

Speaking at the event, Khandre highlighted that the ICCC will provide technology-driven solutions to address the increasing incidents of human-animal encounters. Citizens residing near forest fringes or the general public can call the department's helpline at 1926 to report wildlife movement or forest-related crimes. The information will be relayed to the concerned authorities through the Command Centre, where senior officials will monitor each complaint until it is resolved.

The Minister emphasized the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) cameras installed in forests and their peripheries. The ICCC will enable officials to access live video feeds and satellite imagery, helping track wildlife movement in real time and ensuring timely action. "This technology will allow the Forest Department to act proactively, reducing risks to both humans and animals," he said.

Khandre also noted the success of past conservation initiatives, attributing the rise in wildlife populations to strict enforcement of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Karnataka now boasts 6,395 elephants, ranking first nationally, and 563 tigers, second in the country. Populations of bison, wild boar, bears, leopards, and deer have also increased. However, this growth has led to crop damage and occasional human fatalities, making a technology-backed control system essential.

The ICCC, established at Bengaluru's Forest Building, will directly coordinate with Divisional Command Centres (DCCCs) in 11 divisions where human-wildlife conflict is most prevalent. Khandre asserted that the integration of central and divisional systems will strengthen response mechanisms, reduce losses, and ensure both wildlife conservation and community safety.

"This initiative represents a unique blend of conservation and technology. With real-time monitoring and coordinated response, we aim to minimize human-animal conflict while safeguarding Karnataka's wildlife heritage," the Minister added.

The launch marks a significant step toward modernizing forest management and demonstrates the state's commitment to coexistence between humans and wildlife.

QUICK READ

Nepali thugs vandalise again, people take to the streets

Bengaluru

Panic gripped parts of the city after a group of youths of Nepali origin allegedly clashed among themselves over a trivial issue near Hanuman Giri Hills in Uttarahalli. The violent altercation, which was recorded by local residents on their mobile phones, led to public outrage and traffic disruption in the area. Subramanyapura police have registered a case and launched an investigation. The incident comes close on the heels of a similar clash involving Nepali youths near Vidhana Soudha, which had earlier triggered fear among the public.

Aryavardhan Swamiji in trouble for predicting Sudeep

Bengaluru

Former Bigg Boss contestant and astrologer-statistician Aryavardhan Guruji is facing backlash after a video of his predictions about actor Sudeep went viral. Known for forecasting on news and YouTube channels, Aryavardhan has occasionally been accurate, but his latest remarks have angered Sudeep's fans. Social media erupted with criticism, highlighting the need for caution while making public statements. Authorities and fan groups are reportedly monitoring the situation, as debates continue over the limits of public predictions and their potential impact on celebrities.

Live Phone-in Programme Today

Bengaluru

The Central Municipal Corporation is hosting a live phone-in programme today, allowing residents to report local issues directly to officials. Commissioner Rajendra Cholan said the session will run from 6 to 7 pm, and citizens can call 080-22975803 to lodge complaints. Residents can raise concerns about potholes, streetlight maintenance, garbage disposal, cutting dangerous trees, park upkeep, unauthorized banners, footpaths, encroachments, drain cleaning, and e-account related matters. The initiative aims to address infrastructure and civic issues promptly, giving citizens a direct channel to communicate their problems and receive guidance from the municipal authorities.

Temperature drop, poor food: Lives are dying on roadside

BENGALURU

Extreme cold, dust, stray dogs, and the constant threat of violence are making life unbearable for homeless people in Bengaluru. Many refugees, beggars, and migrant workers sleep on sidewalks, roadsides, under flyovers, and in front of shops, including areas like Majestic, Malleshwaram, and KR Market, struggling to survive without proper shelter. Small children and elderly citizens are especially vulnerable, shivering through the chilly nights.

In December, Bengaluru recorded a sharp drop in temperatures, with nights between December 22 and 25 hitting a minimum of 13 degrees Celsius. While NGOs distributed blankets, clothes, and some food, the aid was insufficient to prevent suffering. Experts warn that poor nutrition, unsafe drinking water, and exposure to polluted air further worsen their health, making them prone to infections, hypothermia, and other illnesses.

Tragically, fifteen homeless people have died in the city over the past 40 days, due to various causes including cold exposure and accidents, such as being hit by vehicles while sleeping on the roadside. Police have registered cases of unnatural deaths in the affected areas, highlighting the scale of the crisis. Officers noted that while extreme cold may not be the sole cause of death, it exacerbates existing health issues.

A doctor says that when refugees sleep on the roadside at night, even in cold weather, they are at risk of death.

The influx of workers coming to Bengaluru in search of employment is rising steadily, increasing the number of people forced to live on the streets. Local authorities are under pressure, but a shortage of funds has limited their ability to provide proper shelters.

Under the centrally sponsored National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM), municipal bodies are expected to register refugees and provide safe accommodation. However, NGOs report that allocations to run these centers have been cut in recent years, leaving many refugees with no choice but to sleep on the streets. "The registration of refugees is increasing year by year, but the funding hasn't kept pace," said an NGO representative. "This is why so many continue to risk their lives on the roadside."

With winter continuing, the combination of harsh weather, inadequate shelter, and poor living conditions leaves the city's most vulnerable residents at constant risk. Immediate intervention and increased support are crucial to prevent further loss of life.

Claims of 'instigation' by in-laws not enough to prosecute: HC

BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court recently ruled that mere claims of instigation or abusive language by in-laws, without specific instances, cannot serve as grounds for criminal prosecution.

Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum made this observation while quashing proceedings against Abeda, her husband Mohammad Runkuddin Jumna, and five other family members. The couple and their relatives, residents of Kalaburagi city, had challenged an FIR registered by the women's police station and ongoing local court proceedings based on a complaint filed by their daughter-in-law, Tehseen Begum.

The petitioners argued that the allegations in Tehseen's complaint, dated July 22, 2023, pertained solely to her husband Nooruddin Jumna. "All allegations regarding neglect, marital discord, and harassment are specifically directed at Nooruddin. There are no individual or specific allegations against any of us. Yet, we have been arrayed as accused," they stated.

After reviewing the records, Justice Magadum noted that the complainant had acknowledged living separately with her husband, in a partitioned section comprising three

rooms. This indicated that the petitioners did not share a common household with her, undermining claims against them.

The judge further highlighted that Tehseen's complaint repeatedly mentioned Nooruddin's prolonged stays in the Gulf as the main cause of marital discord. The allegations against the in-laws were "unsubstantiated, lacking particulars of date, time, place, or specific acts," Justice Magadum stated.

The court held that continuing proceedings against the in-laws would amount to an abuse of the legal process, subjecting them unnecessarily to criminal litigation. The judgment reinforces that vague assertions or generalized claims of instigation, without concrete evidence, are insufficient to prosecute family members in domestic disputes.

By quashing the case, the High Court underscored the importance of specificity in complaints and cautioned against dragging uninvolved relatives into criminal proceedings based solely on allegations of indirect influence or verbal remarks.

Obscene posts against Darshan's wife: 2 more held

BENGALURU

In connection with the case of posting obscene and derogatory content on social media against Vijayalakshmi, wife of actor Darshan, the Bengaluru Cyber Crime Police have taken two more individuals into custody, taking the total number of accused apprehended so far to four.

According to police, Vijayalakshmi, a resident of Hosakerehalli, filed a complaint on December 24 at the Cyber Crime Police Station, alleging that several individuals were posting vulgar, defamatory comments and sending offensive messages targeting her and her family on various social media platforms. She sought legal action against more than 18 individuals involved in circulating such content.

Based on the complaint, the police registered a case and launched an investigation. During the initial phase, two accused were identified and secured for allegedly posting obscene messages against the complainant and her family, following which further inquiry was initiated.

Continuing the probe, Cyber Crime Police officers on January 4 took into custody Nagaraj Gullappa Talwar (23), a petrol bunk manager and resident of Keshavpur in Hubballi, and Prashanth Talwar (23), an auditor residing in Yalavalli, Dharwad. Police said both were allegedly involved in posting or circulating derogatory content online. Further investigation into their role is currently underway.

Pain-free labour: Government hospitals to roll out relief options

BENGALURU

To curb rising C-section rates in Karnataka, the health department is introducing pain-relief options such as epidural anaesthesia and nitrous oxide in government hospitals.

C-sections accounted for nearly 47 percent of institutional deliveries in 2024–25, prompting concern over associated maternal and neonatal risks. Officials hope that reducing fear of childbirth pain will encourage natural deliveries, which carry fewer complications and support maternal and infant health.

An epidural involves injecting regional anaesthesia into the lower back, numbing labour pain while keeping mothers awake. Nitrous oxide, a gas-oxygen mixture, provides mild analgesia and reduces anxiety, allowing women to remain mobile and alert during labour. Both

methods were piloted in Tumakuru, where officials observed that pain perception strongly influences mothers' choice of delivery method.

"From the study, we learned that C-section rates are higher than recommended. We hope new pain-management techniques will help alleviate mothers' fear of labour pain," said Harsh Gupta, Principal Secretary, Health Department.

Implementing epidurals will require additional anaesthetists, while nitrous oxide can be self-administered during contractions. The department is also exploring birthing position guidance, water births, music therapy, and aromatherapy—practices already available at Vani Vilas Hospital—to expand holistic labour support across government facilities.

Experts note that elective C-sections, chosen for perceived safety, can carry higher risks including sepsis, oxygen deprivation, and lower neonatal immunity. To empower mothers, the consent forms for surgical deliveries will now include information on the benefits of natural childbirth.

With these measures, Karnataka aims to lower unnecessary surgical births, reduce maternal mortality, and promote informed decision-making. By combining technology, expert care, and alternative pain-relief methods, the government seeks to make childbirth safer and less intimidating for expectant mothers across the state.

Central Silk Board develops AI microscope with B'luru startup to aid farmers

BENGALURU

Silk farmers may soon cut losses and boost production quality thanks to a new AI-powered digital microscope developed by the Central Silk Board (CSB) in collaboration with a Bengaluru-based startup.

The system, piloted for three months, allows rapid scanning of cocoon samples, increasing testing capacity from 200 to nearly 900 per day. Early detection of silkworm diseases reduces losses, minimises human error, and improves silk quality. The AI-assisted platform also stores and analyses long-term

data to help prevent outbreaks before they affect farms.

Showcased at the recent two-day "Directors' conference of sericulture-practising states and Union territories," the initiative focused on 'Strengthening the silk value chain for inclusive growth.' Developed at a cost of around Rs 40 lakh, the fully automated AI microscope is currently the only unit of its kind operated by CSB.

S. Manthira Moorthy, Director (Tech), CSB, said the system reduces manpower needs while enhancing productivity. Plans include mobile-based consumer testing, entrepreneurship development, and credit and subsidy programs to further support farmers.

P. Shivakumar, member-secretary of CSB under the textiles ministry, highlighted the economic benefits: "These methods help cut complaints and boost competitiveness, protecting farmers since synthetic silk depresses the value of real silk.

HEALTH CONCERN

Sewage-contaminated water sparks health scare

BENGALURU

Foul-smelling, discoloured water caused by sewage contamination has left residents of KSFC Layout in Lingarajapuram, under North City Corporation limits, alarmed and switching to private water sources for over a week. About 30-40 households have reported frequent illnesses in recent months, with some requiring hospitalisation for suspected water-borne infections. Residents of 3rd 'B' Main have urged the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) to urgently trace the source and restore safe drinking water, fearing a public health crisis similar to incidents in Indore.

The problem went unnoticed for weeks, as early symptoms were mistaken for seasonal illness or food poisoning. The scale of contamination became apparent this week when residents noticed frothy, foul-smelling water and thick layers of dark sewage sludge in underground

sumps. "When we opened the sump, it wasn't just dirty water—it was stinking sewage sludge," said Paul Newman, a resident. Families reported gastrointestinal pain, vomiting, and diarrhoea, prompting complaints to BWSSB.

Shamala, another resident, said the water had worsened over time. "Initially, dirty water would flow briefly, then turn clear. Now, it's completely foul-smelling and unusable. We didn't want to take the risk and started buying water from outside," she said.

BWSSB officials inspected the area following complaints and confirmed sewage had mixed with the potable water pipeline at an unidentified point. Residents allege that authorities have yet to pinpoint the exact breach and are digging in multiple locations in a trial-and-error effort. The contamination is believed to have affected over 30 homes along a single lane, though locals fear the impact could be wider. Treating doctors reportedly confirmed that the illnesses were consistent with water contamination, underscoring the urgent need for remedial action.

VK AWARDS BENGALURU

Former CM Basavaraj Bommai inaugurates VK Excellence and Honour Awards in Bengaluru, presenting accolades to North Karnataka achievers, alongside Rahim Khan, Sangeeta Sringeri, and editor Sudarshan Channangihalli.

QUICK READ

Woman posing as KPCC leader cheats aspirants of ₹5.3 crore

Bengaluru

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) police have booked a woman, Shamshad Begum, and her associates for allegedly cheating job aspirants of about ₹5.3 crore by falsely promising government jobs. Begum claimed to be the general secretary of the KPCC Mahila Morcha and allegedly used photographs with senior politicians and ministers to gain credibility. The complaint was filed by Sangamesh Rachaiah from Vijayapura district, who said Begum and her father, M.M. Mansoor Ahmed, met him at a Bengaluru hotel and assured Group D posts in various government departments in return for money. Police said fake identity cards were also shown. Investigations are on to trace other victims and accused.

Pay for roadside parking: GBA to roll out paid parking rules

Bengaluru

Commuters in the city may soon have to pay for parking on public roads, with the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) set to implement pay-and-park rules. The system will initially be rolled out on a pilot basis in areas such as Hebbal, Commercial Street and Yelahanka. Under the proposed rates, four-wheelers will be charged ₹30 per hour, ₹150 per day and ₹3,000 for a monthly pass, while two-wheelers will pay ₹15 per hour, ₹75 per day and ₹1,500 per month. A paid parking plan has already been formulated for 35th Street, from which GBA expects to generate about ₹16 crore in revenue.

Minister orders mandatory term insurance to protect employees' kin

Safeguards sought after insurance lapse deprived bereaved family of full entitlement

BENGALURU

In the wake of technical lapses that resulted in a reduced insurance payout to the family of late IAS officer Mahantesh Bilagi, Medical Education and Skill Development Minister Dr Sharanaprakash R. Patil has ordered the issuance of a circular mandating full and updated term insurance coverage for all employees under his department.

The issue was flagged during a governing council meeting of a medical college, where a senior Finance Department official pointed out that Bilagi had not updated his service status in the term insurance system after his promotion from the State Civil Services to the IAS. Due to this oversight, his family reportedly received nearly ₹50 lakh less than the amount payable to an IAS officer in the event of death.

Taking serious note of the matter, Dr Patil directed Additional Chief Secretary Mohammed Mohsin to issue a department-wide circular making it compulsory for all doctors, officers and staff working in medical colleges and hospitals to enrol in term insurance schemes aligned with their current salary and designation. The move aims to ensure that families of employees receive the full entitled insurance amount in the event of an untimely death.

The Minister observed that many employees, especially those in lower pay scales, either opt for inadequate insurance or do not revise their cover due to financial constraints or lack of awareness. To address this, he instructed the ACS to hold consultations with leading banks and insurance companies to identify affordable and comprehensive term insurance products for employees across all cadres.

In addition, Dr Patil asked senior officials to examine the feasibility of extending term insurance benefits to contract employees working in the department, recognising their contribution to the public health and medical education system.

In another employee-friendly initiative, the Minister directed the ACS and heads of medical colleges and hospitals to explore the absorption of experienced and meritorious outsourced staff into contract positions, strictly in accordance with the reservation roster. He said institutions should prioritise transitioning eligible outsourced personnel with proven experience to contractual roles instead of resorting to fresh recruitment for temporary vacancies.

The measures, Dr Patil said, are aimed at strengthening social security, ensuring fairness in employment practices and providing financial protection to families of all employees serving in the department.

₹1.5 lakh cr investment planned for Bengaluru infrastructure: DCM

BENGALURU

With Bengaluru's population expected to double in the next 20 to 25 years, the State government has decided to invest ₹1.5 lakh crore to address the city's growing infrastructure challenges, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said on Sunday.

Speaking at the 40th anniversary of BBUL Jain Vidyalaya of the Shri Mahaveer Jain Education Society and the 25th anniversary of C.B. Bhandari Jain College at Palace Grounds, Shivakumar said Bengaluru's infrastructure needs a complete transformation. He pointed out that the city, with a population of about 1.4 crore, has nearly 1.3 crore vehicles, resulting in severe traffic congestion. "Hardly anyone uses public transport and most depend on personal vehicles. After taking responsibility for Bengaluru, I have prioritised large-scale investment in infrastructure," he said, adding that despite congestion, people are unwilling to leave the city.

Calling Bengaluru an exceptional city, Shivakumar said it has a rich culture, immense opportunities for quality education, and a vast human resource base. "California has around 3.5 million engineers, but Bengaluru alone has 2.5 million engineers. That is our strength," he said. Recalling a remark by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee during the foundation-laying of the Bengaluru International Airport, Shivakumar noted that earlier world leaders would visit Delhi first, but today they come to Bengaluru before heading to the national capital, underscoring the city's global importance driven by education and talent.

He said Bengaluru is not just a Silicon City, but is also emerging as a health city and developing across sectors. Jain educational institutions, he added, are contributing significantly by providing quality education. Addressing students and elders, Shivakumar stressed the importance of remembering one's roots, institutions, teachers and managements, and supporting those in need. He assured that the government would continue to support the positive contributions of the Jain community.

Earlier, Rajya Sabha member Lehar Singh urged Jain community students to stay away from excessive social media use and focus on studies. Bengaluru Central MP P.C. Mohan highlighted the growing importance of education in today's society, while National Traders' Welfare Board Chairman Sunilji Singh praised the Jain Education Society for its value-based education.

Society president Champalal Bhandari attributed the institution's growth to collective support from trustees, teachers, alumni and parents. More than 2,000 people attended the event.

'Threat to my life': Janardhana Reddy seeks Z-level security

BENGALURU

After the Ballari brawl in which a Congress worker died due to gunfire, Janardhana Reddy expressed fear of a threat to his life.

BJP MLA Gali Janardhana Reddy has claimed that he and his family face a serious threat to their lives following the recent violent clashes in Ballari and has sought immediate Z-category security. Reddy has written separate letters to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, State Home Minister G. Parameshwara and Director General and Inspector General of Police Saleem, seeking enhanced protection.

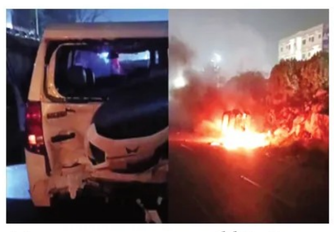
In his letters, Reddy alleged that on January 1, Congress MLA Nara Bharath Reddy and his supporters attacked him and his family during a clash that erupted over the installation of a banner near his residence. He claimed that Bharath Reddy and his associate Satish Reddy attempted to kill him by hurling petrol bombs and firing at him with a gun. "There is a grave threat to my life and the lives of my family members," Reddy stated, demanding that Z-level security be provided without delay.

The violence broke out after a scuffle over the erection of a banner for an event near Reddy's house. The situation escalated rapidly, leading to firing during which Congress worker Rajashekhar was killed. The incident has since triggered a political face-off between the ruling Congress and the opposition BJP in the State.

Reddy has maintained that the attack was premeditated and politically motivated, alleging that local police failed to prevent the violence despite prior warnings. He said the circumstances have left his family living in constant fear and uncertainty.

Responding to the development, Home Minister G. Parameshwara said he has not yet received Janardhana Reddy's letter seeking Z-category security. "If the letter reaches me, appropriate action will be taken," he said, adding that complaints from both sides are under investigation. He noted that details regarding the alleged use of petrol bombs or firearms would emerge after the probe.

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar dismissed Reddy's demand, mocking the request for Z security. Speaking to the media in Bengaluru, he sarcastically remarked that Reddy could even arrange protection from Iran or the United States if he wished, adding that the law would take its own course in the Ballari clash investigation.



Jeep-car collision sparks blaze on highway

BENGALURU

A terrifying road accident involving a government jeep and a Kia car left the latter completely gutted after it burst into flames within seconds on Sunday morning. The incident occurred around 6 a.m. near Yadavanahalli Gate on the National Highway in Anekal taluk on the outskirts of the city. According to police, the vehicles collided with great force, triggering an instant fire in the Kia. Within moments, the car was engulfed in flames and was reduced to ashes before passers-by could intervene. Fire brigade personnel rushed to the spot and managed to douse the blaze, preventing it from spreading to nearby vehicles. Fortunately, no casualties were reported in the incident, a major relief considering the intensity of the fire.

'Audio proof exists of ₹4L demand to build hut in Kogilu Layout'

BENGALURU

BJP MLA S.R. Vishwanath on Sunday claimed that there is an audio recording of a person demanding ₹4 lakh and ₹3.5 lakh to construct huts illegally in Kogilu Layout, Yelahanka, amid the controversy surrounding the demolition of houses in the area.

Speaking to reporters after a fact-finding visit, Vishwanath said a BJP team inspected Fakir Colony and Wasim Layout near Kogilu Layout to ascertain facts related to the recent demolitions. "We have clear audio evidence of a person asking for money to build huts. This exposes the organised racket behind illegal constructions," he alleged.

He said the BJP's fact-finding report would be submitted to the party's state president within two days. The report will include details such as land ownership, survey numbers, BBMP handover records, Google map references and other legal documents. "Our preliminary findings show that nearly 95 per cent of the houses and huts in this area were built in the last two years," he said.

Vishwanath alleged that genuine flood victims and families whose houses were demolished along rajakaluves have not been rehabilitated, while illegal constructions were allowed for "vote-bank politics". "This entire exercise is politically motivated. Poor people are being misled and exploited," he charged.

He announced that the BJP would stage a large-scale protest in Kogilu on December 5, involving beneficiaries who had applied for houses under the Rajiv Gandhi Housing Development Corporation scheme. "If justice is not delivered, we will approach the court," he said.

Demanding strict action, Vishwanath said all those involved in illegally allotting or constructing houses after collecting money—irrespective of whether they are named Wasim or Vishwanath—must be arrested. He alleged that the Congress party was shielding such elements.

"The builder linked to Wasim Layout is a local Congress leader and close to a Minister. We have audio recordings of him demanding money and even admitting that some houses were rented out," he claimed.

Bentley worth ₹5.5 cr seized over ₹70L tax evasion

BENGALURU

RTO officials in Koramangala seized a luxury Bentley car valued at around ₹5.5 crore after uncovering alleged tax evasion of approximately ₹70 lakh. The vehicle, registered two years ago, was found to have been documented using allegedly fake papers, prompting the action.

The owner protested vehemently during the seizure, claiming that the RTO had cheated him and asserting that he had already paid the applicable tax three years ago. He compared himself to high-profile defaulters, insisting he was not committing fraud like Vijay Mallya.

Authorities, however, maintained that the documentation discrepancies justified the seizure. The RTO is continuing its investigation to verify the extent of the alleged tax evasion and the authenticity of the car registration documents. The case highlights ongoing scrutiny of luxury vehicles and high-value registrations in Bengaluru, as officials crack down on potential financial irregularities.

DC seizes 6.08 acres of govt land worth ₹40 cr

BENGALURU

Urban Deputy Commissioner G Jagadish has taken strict action against land grabbers who illegally encroached on government land and a lake on the city outskirts, recovering property valued at around Rs 40 crore.

The encroachment was located at Kachohalli village in Yeshwanthpur hobli, North Taluk. Land grabbers had unlawfully occupied 6.08 acres of lake land in Survey No. 71, allegedly using political influence to fill the lake and construct a layout. The market value of the plot is estimated between Rs 40–50 crore.

Following complaints from locals, DC Jagadish inspected the site with a team of revenue officials, conducted a survey, and cleared the encroached land. A board was erected to mark it as government property.

Locals have also raised concerns about encroachment of 1.20 acres (20 guntas) of grazing land in Survey No. 43. Authorities are gathering details and have indicated that this encroachment will be addressed soon.

The DC's decisive action is being hailed as a warning to others attempting to exploit government land using political clout, reinforcing the administration's commitment to protect public property.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ARTS

Art mirrors State's culture: CM Siddaramaiah

BENGALURU

Art is a mirror of a State's culture and heritage, and Chitrasanthe has emerged as a vital platform bringing artists and art lovers together, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Sunday. He was speaking after inaugurating the 23rd edition of Chitrasanthe, organised by the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishad at its premises on Kumar Krupa Road.

The Chief Minister said this was the eighth time he was participating in Chitrasanthe as Chief Minister and lauded the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishad for its six decades of sustained efforts to encourage artists by providing a space to exhibit and sell their works. Chitrasanthe, he noted, has now entered its 23rd year and continues to grow in scale and significance. This year's event has attracted participation from artists representing 22 States and four Union Territories, reflecting its national stature.

Siddaramaiah said there has been a long-standing demand to establish museums for aspiring artists in every district, and assured that the government would consider the proposal positively. He added that such initiatives would help nurture young talent and preserve regional art forms.

Highlighting the theme of this year's Chitrasanthe, which is dedicated to the environment, the Chief Minister stressed that environmental awareness is essential for sustainable living. "If we protect the environment, it will protect us," he said, pointing out that environmental pollution has increased in several Indian cities, including Bengaluru, while Delhi is facing severe and unliveable conditions.

He said the State government has launched programmes to plant three to five crore saplings every year to improve green cover. While any region should ideally have at least 30 per cent forest cover, Karnataka currently has around 20 per cent, and sincere efforts would be made to bridge the gap.

Referring to environmentalist Salumarada Thimmakka, Siddaramaiah said she earned respect and recognition by nurturing trees like her own children. He urged citizens to emulate her example and take up tree planting, noting that it does not require large investments but only determination.

He concluded by saying that many people are already fighting for environmental protection and assured that the government would intensify its efforts to support such initiatives.

QUICK READ

Madaniyya Sadath Foundation distributes financial aid

Mangaluru

The Madaniyya Sadath Foundation (MSF), Karnataka, provided financial assistance to support medical expenses of underprivileged Sadath families. A cheque of ₹44,000 was released by Syed Jalaluddin Thangal Ujire during the distribution event. The event was attended by MSF President Syed Jawad Thangal Al Hashimi Ullal, Secretary Hanzh Ullal, Treasurer Rameez Melangadi, Abdul Razzak Sakhafi Madantyar, and Nizam Shah Kotepura. The foundation continues to support vulnerable families, ensuring access to necessary medical care and relief. Such initiatives aim to empower marginalized communities by providing timely financial assistance and promoting social welfare within Karnataka.

Thick fog causes lorry accident in Chamarajanagar

Chamarajanagar

A dense fog severely reduced visibility, causing a Tata Eicher lorry to collide with a road divider near Venkataiyan Chatra in the taluk. The lorry, transporting a load of paper from Tamil Nadu, was damaged in the accident. The driver, Rajasekhar, sustained minor injuries but, fortunately, no life-threatening harm occurred. He received immediate first aid on the spot. Police officials visited the site to assess the situation, while locals expressed anger, blaming the poorly constructed divider for the mishap. A formal case has been registered at the Chamarajanagar Rural Police Station, and further investigation into the accident is underway.

‘Menstruation is a natural process, not a social taboo’

Menstruation is a natural, scientific process, and awareness programs aim to eliminate stigma and empower young women

RAMANAGARA

Menstruation is a natural biological process, and the stigma surrounding it must be eliminated, said MHM District Chairperson Surekha Shetty. She emphasized that women and students must overcome feelings of shame and understand that menstruation is a scientifically normal bodily function.

Speaking at a menstrual awareness interaction program held at Blossom School in Ramanagara, organised in collaboration with Rotary Club, Rotary Ramanagara and MHM, she highlighted that the belief of “menstruation is a shameful secret” has existed in society for centuries. Even today, in some places, menstruating women are isolated or made to stay outside their homes. Such superstitions can only be eradicated through awareness and education, she said.

Shetty explained that menstruation is a routine physical process in every woman’s life and should not be exaggerated or viewed negatively. What truly matters is maintaining proper hygiene during this period. Despite many awareness programs being conducted, girls still feel embarrassed to even mention the word menstruation, which she termed unfortunate.

She urged girls and women to treat it as a normal phase and reject the stigma attached to it.

Earlier, a bike rally was flagged off from Bengaluru to Malavalli to spread awareness about menstrual health, women’s rights, and empowerment. Riders carried placards with messages such as “Menstruation is a biological process,” “It is not a taboo,” and “Speak openly about periods.” At Blossom International School, awareness was also conveyed creatively through traditional puppet shows. More than 100 girl students from Blossom School and Kingston Public School participated.

Rotary leaders Vinuta Gowda, Soumya Kumaraswamy, Prakash and several members including Guru, Nagesh, Kumaraswamy, Paramesh, Sunil, Prabhakar, Naveen and others were present at the event.

Case filed against Sudheep Shetty over provocative post

BlurbSudheep Shetty faces police action for a provocative social media post targeting the Udupi Muslim Harmony Committee, allegedly inciting communal tension

KARKALA

A self-initiated case has been registered against Sudheep Shetty at the Karkala Rural Police Station for allegedly posting provocative content on social media concerning the Udupi District Muslim Harmony Alternate Committee. The post, published on his Facebook page, followed the recent Shirur Matha Alternate Mahotsava celebrations and the associated charitable distribution.

In his post, Shetty criticized the committee, claiming that instead of promoting genuine communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims, the committee focused on symbolic gestures such as distributing sherbet and bottled water. He further alleged that true social harmony requires addressing issues like “Love Jihad, cow slaughter, terrorism, attacks on Hindu processions, vandalism of food or religious sites, and theft,” and accused the committee of neglecting these matters.

Authorities reported that Shetty’s post was seen as inciting hatred among communities based on caste, religion, and ethnicity, potentially disturbing public peace. The post came to the attention of police officer Rudresh while reviewing social media on the evening of January 3. Acting on this, the Karkala Rural Police have registered a formal case against him, and a detailed investigation is underway to assess the implications of the post and identify any further violations.

The police have emphasized that such content that could disturb communal harmony or spread hatred is taken seriously, and strict legal action is being pursued. The ongoing investigation aims to maintain social peace while addressing online misuse that threatens public order in the district.

Angaragudde Badria Dafa Committee hosts 11th annual Dafa Ratib

MULKI

The Al-Madrasatul Badria Jumma Masjid Jamat Committee and Badria Dafa Committee in Angaragudde, Badria town, successfully organised the 11th annual Salat, religious discourses, spiritual sessions, and the Inter-State Dafa Ratib competition, culminating in a grand closing ceremony on Saturday night at the Masjid premises.

The event was inaugurated by Karnataka Legislative Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader, who highlighted the importance of educating youth about cultural values and religious traditions to ensure continuity across generations. He emphasized unity across all communities, stating that removing hatred and malice from our homes is the first step toward a peaceful society. With guidance from learned scholars, communities can advance toward a bright and harmonious future.

The program reflected the local tradition of interfaith harmony, with contributions from community members of all religions. Khader further stressed that cultural practices should serve as remedies to heal social divisions and foster mutual respect.

The event was inaugurated by Moulana Usman Faizi Todaru, Mudarris of Mulki Shafi Jumma Masjid, with Nisar Ahmad presiding as the president of Angaragudde Badria Jumma Masjid. Chief speeches were delivered by Khatib and Mudarris A.M. Jabir Faizi, and welcome addresses by Nawaz, president of the Badria Dafa Committee. Duas and blessings were offered by Assayyid Shibli Thangal Al Bukhari from Kannur, Kerala.

Key dignitaries included M.A. Gaffoor, Chairperson of the Coastal Development Board, Anwar Sadath Bajatturu (SDPI Rural District President), Iqbal Ahmad (DK District JD(S) Vice President), Mohan Kotyan (Mulki Block Congress President), and community leaders, masjid members, and local entrepreneurs. More than 100 participants attended, engaging in spiritual discourses, Dafa Ratib recitations, and inter-state competition activities, reflecting a commitment to faith, culture, and communal harmony.

Ramotsava Emerging as a Powerful Platform for Women: Manchegowda

RAMANAGARA

Congress leader Manchegowda said the Ramotsava celebrations are proving to be an excellent stage for women, students and the youth to showcase their talents. He was speaking after distributing prizes to winners of a rangoli competition held at Kempégaudanadoddi village on Sunday. Rangoli is a symbol of our culture and tradition, he said, adding that it represents women’s creativity and must be preserved by future generations. Competitions like these will inspire young people to continue this artistic heritage, he noted.

He appreciated MLA H.A. Iqbal Hussain for organising Ramotsava celebrations in the sacred land of Lord Rama, calling it a matter of pride for everyone. From January 15 to 18, grand programs will be held as part of the celebrations. He said Ramotsava is not limited to cultural events alone but is also creating opportunities for discovering hidden talent in both rural and urban areas. Along with cultural competitions, events like cricket, kabaddi and athletics are being organised, and winners are being rewarded, helping participants gain confidence and recognition.

At Kempégaudanadoddi, more than 300 participants drew beautiful rangolis, captivating spectators with their colourful creativity. The competition was intense, making prize selection challenging for organisers.

Finally, nine women were awarded first, second and third prizes across three categories, while 11 women received consolation prizes. Anusha from Vaderahalli served as judge for the competition. Former Gram Panchayat President Asha Manchegowda and several local leaders were also present at the event.

Hunasuru hosts 37th national road safety month observance

HUNASURU

The Sub-Divisional Office of Hunasuru hosted the 37th National Road Safety Month celebrations, organized by the Assistant Regional Transport Office (RTO). The event was inaugurated with a ceremonial lamp lighting by RTO officer Nayaz Pasha. Following the inauguration, the office unveiled posters promoting road safety awareness as part of the “Safe Roads Week” campaign.

Speaking at the occasion, Superintendent Satish K.D. emphasized the importance of adhering to traffic rules, ensuring vehicle safety, and fostering responsible driving habits among motorists to reduce road accidents. Senior Motor Vehicle Inspector Mahesh D. also highlighted the critical role of transport authorities and local stakeholders in promoting road safety measures.

The event was attended by key members of the Taluk Lorry Owners’ Association, including President Mohammad Rafi, along with drivers Anil, Sharadadevi, Mahadev, Shivanna, Nataraj, and Santosh, among others. Participants collectively stressed the need for continuous awareness campaigns and collaboration between authorities and transport operators to ensure safer roads across the region.

The RTO distributed educational materials and posters during the program, aiming to instill a culture of caution, compliance, and responsibility among drivers and vehicle owners. Officials noted that such initiatives are vital for reducing accidents, enhancing public safety, and fostering a responsible road-user community in Hunasuru taluk.

The event reinforced the RTO’s commitment to road safety advocacy and highlighted the active participation of local lorry owners and drivers in promoting safer transport practices.

Hunasuru BSP announces new office bearers ahead of elections

HUNASURU

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Hunasuru taluk has recently appointed new office bearers, district president Chandrashekhar announced at a press conference held at the City Journalists’ Association office.

Krishna M. Beejaganahalli, a retired officer from the KSR.C department, has been appointed as the taluk president. Chandregowda Mookanahalli will serve as vice president, Jayaram Nelluru as general secretary, Manjunath Halebeedu as taluk in-charge, and Lokesh as treasurer. Krishnaappa has been named office secretary, and Narsimha Halebeedu as city president, with Mubarak also taking a key role.

Chandrashekhar emphasized that the party welcomes individuals who align with BSP’s principles and are interested in contesting upcoming elections. He added that the BSP has always relied on its own strength and principles, not external funding or support from industrialists, to hold and exercise power.

In addition, preparations are underway in the taluk to celebrate BSP leader Mayawati’s 69th birthday on January 15 at Jagan Mohan Palace, Mysuru. Party members will visit households to collect contributions for the occasion.

The press briefing was attended by BSP state secretary Bharat Gowda, district incharge Basavanna Dundege, taluk president Krishna M., vice president Chandregowda, district secretary Rajesh, and several other local office bearers. The new appointments aim to strengthen the party’s organizational base and prepare for the forthcoming elections, ensuring active participation at both local and district levels.

This restructuring marks a strategic step by BSP to consolidate support and enhance its presence in Hunasuru ahead of the electoral season.

Return to organic farming: MLA

CHIKKAMAGALURU

Warning that excessive use of chemicals and pesticides in agriculture has made everyday food toxic, MLA H.D. Thammaiah on Sunday called upon farmers to return to organic farming practices and adopt millets to ensure chemical-free and healthy food.He was speaking after inaugurating the district-level Organic and Millet Mela organised at the amphitheatre of AIT College in the city. “Due to indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, the food we consume today has become poisonous Thammaiah said.

DRUNKEN RAGE MURDER

In drunken rage, father allegedly kills son in Ch’magaluru

CHIKKAMAGALURU

A shocking incident has emerged from Anegundi village in Mudigere taluk of Chikkamagaluru district, where a father allegedly killed his own son while under the influence of alcohol. The deceased has been identified as 29-year-old Pradeep Achar. His father, Ramesh Achar, is accused of brutally attacking him during a heated argument on Saturday night.

According to reports, frequent quarrels between the father and son had become a regular occurrence in the household, largely triggered by drunken disputes. The tension at home had reportedly become so unbearable that Pradeep’s mother had earlier left the house out of frustration, leaving only the father and son living together.

On the night of the incident, yet another argument broke out between them. In a fit of rage and intoxication, Ramesh is said to have assaulted his son with a sharp object before allegedly falling asleep in the house. Pradeep remained bleeding through the night and tragically succumbed to his injuries as there was no one to help him.

The next morning, Ramesh reportedly dragged his son’s body out of the house, which shocked neighbours who immediately alerted the police. Senior police officials, including SP Jitendra Kumar Dayama, visited the spot and conducted an inspection. A case has been registered at the Balehalli Police Station, and an investigation is underway to determine the full sequence of events and the exact circumstances leading to the crime. Authorities are expected to take further legal action following inquiry procedures.

Branch canal to flow water by February end: Min D. Sudhakar

Chitradurga branch canal under Bhadra Dam Project nears completion, set for trial water flow by February 2026, said Minister D. Sudhakar

CHITRADURGA

The construction of the Chitradurga branch canal under the Bhadra Dam Project is nearing completion, with all previous hurdles resolved. The 114 km canal, extending from Veyjakshan near Ajjampura in Chikkamagaluru district to the Gonuru Aqueduct in Chitradurga taluk, is expected to carry water on a trial basis by the end of February 2026, stated Minister for Planning, Statistics, and District Affairs D. Sudhakar during a press briefing.

The minister inspected ongoing canal works at Chikkasiddavvanahalli and Gonuru Aqueduct with local legislators, representatives, and officials.

Construction had been delayed for four years due to farmer objections near Abbina Holalu village, Ajjampura taluk, but consensus was reached in March 2025 under Deputy CM D.K. Shivakumar's leadership. Similar issues in Hiriyur taluk have also been resolved, aiming to complete the Bhadra Dam project within the current government's tenure.

Once operational, the canal will supply 50% capacity water to 90 tanks across Kadur (22), Hosadurga (32), Holalkere (30), Hiriyur (3), and Chitradurga (3), benefiting 73,946 hectares of farmland in Hiriyur, Chitradurga, Holalkere, and Challakere taluks. The 1.94 km Gonuru Aqueduct, set for completion by August 2026, is the tallest in the state at approximately 120 feet.

The project has been allocated Rs. 2,600 crore for rainwater harvesting and tank-filling works across Holalkere, Chitradurga, Hiriyur, and Challakere taluks. So far, the state has spent Rs. 11,290 crore by November 2025, with Rs. 10,000 crore more required to complete the project. Funding has been supplemented by the state government after central support fell short.

State legislators N.Y. Gopalakrishna, Dr. M. Chandrappa, T. Raghumurthy, district officials, and farmer leaders attended the press briefing. Minister D. Sudhakar emphasized that continued budgetary support will ensure the timely completion of this vital irrigation infrastructure.

Udupi launches 'AkkaPade' for women and children

UDUPI

The Karnataka government has formally launched its ambitious 'AkkaPade' scheme, a dedicated initiative aimed at ensuring immediate protection and support for women and children facing danger or distress. Implemented in collaboration with the Home Department and the Women & Child Development Department, the programme is designed to respond swiftly to cases involving abuse, violence, neglect, and exploitation, while also strengthening preventive safety measures across the state.

The new initiative, in collaboration with Home and Women & Child Development departments, aims to provide immediate protection and support to those facing violence or exploitation

A primary objective of AkkaPade is to create greater awareness about safety mechanisms available to women and children, both in public and private spaces. The scheme seeks to prevent crimes and atrocities by enabling rapid intervention, offering legal protection, and building a secure environment where vulnerable individuals feel confident to seek help without fear.

In Udupi, the initiative was officially rolled out with the launch of the AkkaPade patrol unit by the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police on January 3 at the DC office. These patrol vehicles will remain operational across the district in two working shifts — from 7 am to 2 pm and from 2 pm to 8 pm — ensuring consistent presence and accessibility.

Women and children in emergencies can avail assistance through dedicated helplines. The Child Helpline (1098), Women's Helpline (181), and Police Emergency Helpline (112) will serve as the primary contact points for reporting distress situations. Authorities have emphasized that AkkaPade is not merely a policing measure but a social safeguard intended to protect dignity, ensure justice, and build a safer Karnataka for women and children.

Fire destroys harvested ragi fodder in Chikkaballapur

CHIKKABALLAPUR

A devastating fire in Chikkaballapur taluk has destroyed an entire stock of harvested ragi fodder, leaving a farmer in shock and financial distress. The incident occurred in Arasanahalli village, where farmer Manjunath had cultivated ragi on two acres of land. After harvesting the crop, he left the ragi stalks spread in the field, planning to gather and stack them after a couple of days. However, before he could do so, a sudden blaze engulfed the entire area, reducing the fodder to ashes.

The fire spread rapidly across the field, burning almost all the ragi hay. Locals rushed to the spot, but by the time help arrived, most of the fodder had already been destroyed. The exact cause of the fire remains unclear. It is yet to be determined whether it was an accidental blaze or an act of mischief by unidentified individuals. Authorities are expected to look into the matter.

For Manjunath, the loss is severe, as the ragi hay is essential both as fodder for livestock and as an economic resource for farmers. What was supposed to support his livelihood has now turned into ash, pushing him into anxiety over how to recover the loss. The incident has once again highlighted the vulnerability of farmers who struggle against unpredictable challenges even after successfully harvesting their crops.

Minister D. Sudhakar offers bagina to V.V. Sagar reservoir

CHITRADURGA

In a ceremonial event at V.V. Sagar Reservoir, District-in-Charge Minister D. Sudhakar performed a ritual offering, marking another milestone for the reservoir. The dam, adorned with colorful floral decorations, witnessed Sudhakar along with legislators B.G. Govindappa, T. Raghumurthy, Dr. M. Chandrappa, and other dignitaries performing a traditional puja, offering flowers, and sprinkling ghee as a gesture of respect and gratitude.

Minister Sudhakar noted that a similar ritual was conducted in January 2025, and the reservoir reached full capacity again in October. Plans to hold the ritual in December were delayed due to the unavailability of the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister, prompting the district administration and local representatives to conduct it this week. The fact that the reservoir filled twice in a single year has brought immense joy to the local populace.

Addressing the attendees, Sudhakar highlighted efforts to resolve agricultural challenges caused by excess backwater from V.V. Sagar. A comprehensive plan, prepared last month under the leadership of the Deputy Chief Minister and district lawmakers, aims to address farmers' concerns efficiently. New initiatives have been taken to repair canals, roads, and bridges, ensuring that water management issues do not disrupt local agriculture.

Lawmakers B.G. Govindappa, Dr. M. Chandrappa, and T. Raghumurthy, along with P. Ragha, Chairman of the State Sanitation Commission, District Collector T. Venkatesh, Additional DC B.T. Kumaraswamy, Executive Director of Visvesvaraya Irrigation Works Sannachittayya, Chief Engineer F.H. Lamani, Superintending Engineer Harish K.T., Executive Engineer Chandrappa Barikar, and farmer leaders, were present during the ritual.

The ceremony reaffirmed the administration's commitment to both spiritual traditions and practical support for farmers dependent on the reservoir's waters, strengthening community trust and regional water management initiatives.

Yellapur: Accused Rafiq Found dead

KARWAR

Rafiq Yallur, the man who stabbed 30-year-old Ranjita Bansode to death in Kalammanagara locality of Yallapur town, was found dead on Sunday. He had apparently taken his own life in a nearby forest.

Rafiq attacked Ranjita by slashing her throat with a knife before fleeing the scene. Locals rushed the gravely injured woman to the government hospital in Yallapur for initial treatment, but she succumbed en route to KIMS Hospital in Hubballi for advanced care.

Police promptly visited the spot and launched a manhunt for the absconding Rafiq. His photograph was circulated on social media to seek public assistance in tracing him. The incident, carrying communal sensitivity, created fear in the town. Many condemned the act and demanded swift capture of the perpetrator.

Superintendent of Police Deepan M.N. camped in Yallapur to oversee operations. Hindu organizations had called for a bandh in the town on Sunday.

Leaders from some Hindu groups gathered at the police station, insisting they would not leave until Rafiq was apprehended.

Ranjita, a divorcee, had married Sachin Kater from Solapur 12 years ago. The couple had a child, but differences arose after five years, leading her to stay at her sister's home. She recently obtained a divorce and worked as a cook's assistant, most lately at a school, to support herself.

Suspicions point to a premeditated plot. Rafiq allegedly harbored intentions to marry Ranjita and grew enraged when she refused. Acquainted from earlier days, he intensified pursuits after her separation from her husband, pressuring her for love and marriage.

Reports suggest he arrived armed with a knife, confronted her, and attacked upon rejection, supporting theories of a planned assault. The two were former classmates, which facilitated natural interactions. Rafiq frequently spoke to her over phone, allegedly coercing affection and attempting to draw her closer.

He used to visit the house where she stayed due to their acquaintance, but Ranjita's sister opposed this and warned him against coming. Thereafter, Rafiq avoided the residence.

Ch'ballapur sheep deaths: ₹7,5K aid for framers

CHIKKABALLAPUR

Chikkaballapur's Chintamani taluk witnessed the mysterious deaths of several sheep in Kachahalli village. District Collector G. Prabhu assured owners of ₹7,500 compensation per sheep. Officials inspected the carcasses, consulted veterinary doctors, and directed prompt investigation into the cause. Remaining sheep received immediate treatment, while post-mortem samples were sent for lab analysis to determine the exact reason for the deaths.

Massive financial scam uncovered at Amparu Cooperative Society

UDUPI

A major financial irregularity has surfaced at the Ampar Cooperative Agricultural Society (Ltd) in the jurisdiction of Shankaranarayana police station. Sadashiva Vaidya, who served as the in-charge Chief Executive Officer during the 2023-24 fiscal year, faces allegations of abusing his position to illegally utilize society funds.

The complaint claims he misappropriated a total of Rs. 3,95,65,000 by recording fictitious expenses in interest accounts, generating fake deposit accounts, and conducting irregularities in savings accounts.

Investigations revealed that reconciliation entries in the society's computer records were made using passwords "Vaidya" and "Manager," which the accused reportedly operated.

Furthermore, he allegedly opened counterfeit deposit, savings, and loan accounts linked to his relatives to divert the funds for personal gain.

These malpractices came to light during a routine verification of the society's fixed deposits. Current in-charge CEO Praveen Kumar Shetty from Ampar village, filed the formal complaint.With intent to defraud the institution and its customers, the accused created fake passwords and misused crores of rupees.

Workshop stresses timely RTI responses to avoid penalties

CHIKKAMAGALURU

The Karnataka Information Commission, established on October 12, 2005, has played a pivotal role in bringing transparency and accountability to governance, stated State Information Commissioner Dr. Harish Kumar.

He shared these views while addressing a district and taluk-level awareness workshop and interactive session on the Right to Information Act-2005, organized by the district administration and zilla panchayat. The event took place today at Abdul Nazir Sab Hall in the zilla panchayat premises in Chikkamagaluru, targeting officers and gram panchayat development officers.

Public information officers must possess a thorough understanding of the RTI Act and general awareness. Applications seeking information should be examined as per rules and responded to based on relevant sections of the law.

Over the last ten years, delays in providing information, incomplete responses, and other violations have resulted in fines totaling around Rs. 10 crore imposed on government officials and deposited with the commission. Therefore, officers should ensure replies within stipulated timelines, he advised.

Applications under the RTI Act must be disposed of within 30 days of receipt. Requests concerning government employment or facilities warrant disclosure. Details like an officer's name and designation, being public records, should be shared.However, information related to ongoing investigations—where final reports are pending or confirmation from concerned authorities is absent—cannot be revealed.Officers need basic knowledge of the law and related statutes.Even though the RTI Act came into force in 2005, it applies to records from the previous 20 years. Numerous directives from high courts and the Supreme Court over these two decades have strengthened its implementation and scope, he noted.

Fellow Commissioner Badruddin K. emphasized that officers must scrutinize applications lawfully and dispose of them accordingly. Expressing hope that the district achieves top rank in RTI compliance, he cautioned careful handling of personal details, such as CCTV footage, final charge sheets, or case counts against individuals, by correctly interpreting relevant sections.

SECTION 1: INVITATION FOR TENDERS (IFT)

Govt. of Karnataka
Commissioner, Chamarajanagara-Ramasamudra Urban Development Authority
CHAMARAJANAGARA-571313

NIT No: CHUDA/Comm /AE-1/Tender-04/2025-26 **Dated:02.01.2026**

The Commissioner, Chamarajanagara-Ramasamudra Urban Development Authority, Chamarajanagara invites tenders from eligible tenderers in Two cover system for the construction of work detailed in the table through KPPP portal of the Government of Karnataka viz. http// kppp.karnataka.gov.in).The tenderers are advised to note the Minimum qualification criteria specified in clause-3 of the Instructions to Tenderers to qualify for award of the contract.

SL No.	Name of work	Form No.	Approximate value of work (In Laks)	Earnest money deposit (Rs)	Period of completion excluding Monson season	Contractor eligibility	Category
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
01	IMPROVEMENTS TO KODIMOLE LAKE WORK IN CHAMARA-JANAGARA TOWN.	**K/W-4**	**3,56,55,000/-** (Including GST)	**4,31,000/-** (Excluding GST)	6 months (Including rainy seanon)	**Class-I and above KPWD Civil Contractor**	General

Last Date for Submission of bids in E-portal : 10-02-2026.
Date of Opening of Technical bid :12-02-2026 17.30 pm
Date of Opening of Financial bid: 16-02-2026 17.30 pm
Tender must be submitted along with Site inspection report inspected with concerned officers on 23-01-2026

Sd/ Chairman
Chamarajanagara-Ramasamudra Urban Development Authority
Chamarajanagara.

Sd/- Commissioner
Chamarajanagara-Ramasamudra Urban Development Authority
Chamarajanagara.

DIPR CHANAGAR: 613:20256

NAME CHANGE

I, **SHIVKUMAR CHANDRAPPA**, S/o, Chandrappa, Resident Resident of No. 117-1, Kathariguppe, Bangalore – 562126, have changed my name to **SHIVAKUMAR CHANDRAPPA**, vide affidavit dated: 02.01.2026 before notary A.M. RAJASEKAR, Bengaluru.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact:
080-41209042

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT STOCK (SECURITIES)
Finance Department, Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru

NOTICE

1. Aggregate Amount : Total Rs.6000 crore (Rs.1,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.19% SGS 2032; Rs.2,000 crore - 5-Year 6-Month Tenure; Rs.1,000 crore - 8-Year Tenure; Rs.2,000 crore - 10-Year 6-Month Tenure)
2. Method of Issue : By auction, through RBI (PDO), Mumbai
3. Date of auction : January 06, 2026

Government of Karnataka invites subscription to the above securities. Copies of the Notification and Application forms may be obtained from PDO, RBI, Bangalore. Non-competitive bidding facility has been introduced by RBI to encourage participation of retail investors. The Government stock up to 10% of the notified amount of the sale will be allotted to eligible individuals and institutions. Sample Tender Forms and the revised scheme of Non-competitive bidding facility is available on the website **www.rbi.org.in.**

Sd/- (Ikram Shariff)
Joint Secretary to Government
(Budget & Resources), Finance Department

DIPR/CP/4796/Zen/2025-26

KARNATAKA URBAN WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD
Ramakrishna Ashrama Road, Amarjyothi Nagar, TUMAKURU-572105. Ph:0816-2200209

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through e-Procurement Portal only)

Name of work: Operation and Maintenance of Bulk Water Supply system from Housing chamber at Kadaba tank to WTP at Township area and OHT at factory area of HAL for the period of 1(One) year for the 4th year Under DC Works of HAL.

Tender Indent No. **KUWSDB/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT472**

Amount put to tender: **Rs. 64.67 Lakhs (Excluding GST).**

Calendar of Events: Last date and Time for receipt of Tenders:**17-01-2026 upto 5.30PM.** Further details can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/- Executive Engineer
KUWS. & D.Board, Division, TUMAKURU

DIPR/TUM/RO-215/25-26/Oysters

QUICK READ

Absence of major snowfall triggers concern

Srinagar

The minimum temperature remained several notches below the freezing point on Sunday in the Valley as cold wave tightened its grip further on Jammu and Kashmir. Due to a partially clear night sky, night temperatures throughout the valley remained below the freezing point, as the prospects of snowfall evaded the plains, with dry, cold conditions again affecting these areas. Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 3.2 degrees Celsius, Gulmarg minus 6.5 degrees Celsius and Pahalgam minus 4 degrees Celsius. Jammu city recorded a minimum temperature of 10 degrees Celsius, Katra town 7 degrees Celsius, Batote 1.9 degrees Celsius, Banihal minus 0.9 degrees Celsius and Bhaderwah minus 1.6 degrees Celsius.

AIADMK to begin statewide consultations for manifesto

Chennai

The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) has formally shifted into election mode ahead of the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, unveiling an extensive roadmap for manifesto preparation and candidate selection. According to a statement issued by the party, a 10-member manifesto committee will begin a statewide tour from January 7 to hold consultations with the public and various stakeholder groups. The tour, scheduled to run until January 20, will cover all five zones of the State and span all 38 districts, reflecting the party's attempt to craft a broad-based and regionally responsive election manifesto.

ECI gets 1,90,463 applications for inclusion of new names

Kolkata

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has provided statistical details of applications for additions and deletions of names in the voters' list, submitted during the hearing sessions on claims and objections that began after the list was published on December 16, 2025. Insiders from the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), West Bengal, said that from December 16, 2025, to January 3, 2026 (the latest trend available), the ECI has received 1,90,463 Form-6 applications, which pertain to the inclusion of new names in the voters' list.

New lab report finds Bhagirathpura water samples pathogen-free

INDORE

Amid the ongoing water contamination crisis in Bhagirathpura locality, which has claimed multiple lives and affected thousands, a recent laboratory report from Sri Aurobindo Medical College and PG Institute provides a reassuring update: five water samples tested negative for key waterborne pathogens.

Sharing these results on his X handle, state Urban Development Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya said, Under the guidance of Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav and the leadership of Indore Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava and Divisional Commissioner Dr Sudam P. Khade, the positive results of chlorination and other measures being taken for drinking water purification in Bhagirathpura have become evident.

The Central Clinical Molecular Laboratory Report, dated January 4, analysed samples collected from Bhagirathpura using the RT-PCR method.

All five samples (S-01 to S-05), each 25 ml in sterile bottles, tested negative for bacterial pathogens including E. coli O157, Generic E. coli, Vibrio cholerae, and Salmonella, as well as viral pathogens Rotavirus and Enterovirus.

The interpretation states, These results indicate that the RT-PCR analysis of all five water samples showed negative results for the targeted bacterial pathogens (E. coli O157, Generic E. coli, Vibrio cholerae, and Salmonella) and viral pathogens (Rotavirus and Enterovirus).

BRS demands apology from Telangana CM Revanth Reddy

Bharat Rashtra Samithi sought an apology from Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy over remarks made in Assembly.

HYDERABAD

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) on Sunday demanded an unconditional apology from Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, accusing him of using abusive and unparliamentary language against opposition leaders during proceedings of the State Legislative Assembly.

The controversy arose after the Chief Minister, while replying to a short discussion on Krishna river waters in the Assembly, allegedly used objectionable remarks targeting BRS working president K. T. Rama Rao and BRS deputy leader in the Assembly T. Harish Rao. Reacting strongly, Harish Rao said the Chief Minister had unleashed what

he described as repulsive and indecent language unbecoming of a constitutional office-holder.

In a post on social media platform X, Harish Rao said it was deeply ironic that the Chief Minister spoke against abusive language while allegedly resorting to it himself on the Assembly floor. He demanded an apology for the use of what he termed a vulgar expression in the House, which he described as the temple of democracy. The BRS leader said such language would not be tolerated by any civilised society.

Escalating his criticism, Harish Rao alleged that threatening statements and violent rhetoric in the Assembly reflected political depravity and accused the Speaker of failing to restrain the Chief Minister. He said the manner in which expletives were allegedly used would make any civilised society hang its head in shame.

The episode comes amid heightened political tension in the Telangana Assembly. BRS legislators were not present during the discussion as the party, the principal opposition, has announced a boycott of the ongoing winter session. The boycott is in protest against what the party claims is the Speaker's biased conduct toward the ruling Congress government.

Harish Rao, a former irrigation minister, also criticised Revanth Reddy for claiming credit for a stay granted by the National Green Tribunal on the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Project, asserting that the legal battle was fought by the BRS. He further dismissed the Chief Minister's claim that the Congress brought the Palamuru Rangareddy Project, calling it baseless.

Uncertainty over RS nomination led to Mausam Noor's exit

KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Sunday said that former party MP Mausam Noor decided to quit the party due to uncertainty over securing a Rajya Sabha nomination for another term. Party sources indicated that Noor's current term as a Rajya Sabha member is set to end in April, and the lack of clarity over her future role within the party played a key role in her decision.

Trinamool leaders pointed out that Noor may now contest the upcoming West Bengal Assembly elections from Malda district, where political equations have been rapidly shifting. According to party insiders, Noor was also facing differences with sections of the district leadership over what were described as minor issues, which gradually widened into conflicts of personal and political interest.

The Trinamool Congress further alleged that Noor had earlier incurred the party's displeasure by campaigning for her cousin, Isha Khan Choudhury, during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Isha Khan Choudhury, a Congress MP from the Maldaha Dakshin constituency, belongs to a prominent political family in the region, and Noor's open support for him reportedly caused resentment within the Trinamool ranks.

Ahead of the West Bengal Assembly polls, Mausam Noor formally returned to the

Trinamool Congress claimed Mausam Noor quit the party due to uncertainty over renomination and internal political differences.

Indian National Congress. She joined the party at its headquarters in New Delhi in the presence of senior leaders, including Jairam Ramesh, Ghulam Ahmed Mir, and West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee president Shuvankar Sarkar.

Noor is a two-time former Congress Lok Sabha MP from the Maldaha Uttar constituency, having represented the seat from 2009 to 2019 before switching to the Trinamool Congress. Following her return to the Congress, Trinamool district leaders claimed that she had been in touch with the Congress high command for some time, citing the unfavourable political situation in Malda and an improvement in her relationship with her cousin Isha Khan Choudhury.

RPF jawan suffers gunshot injury

JAMMU

A jawan of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) was injured in a gunshot incident on Sunday at the railway station in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district. Officials said that the jawan was injured after sustaining a gunshot wound at the Railway Station.

Police have confirmed that the injured personnel was immediately shifted to a nearby hospital, where he is undergoing treatment. His condition is stated to be stable. Meanwhile, police and railway authorities have taken cognisance of the incident.

The RPF is exclusively deployed on various railway stations and along the rail track from Kathua to the Baramulla district of the union territory to provide security to trains, passengers and railway staff. RPF is India's central armed police force responsible for protecting railway property, passengers, and passenger areas, operating under the Ministry of Railways to ensure safety, prevent crime, and assist travellers, including rescuing children and combating trafficking.

The key functions of RPF include ensuring the safety and security of travellers, particularly women and children, through initiatives like 'Operation Amaanat (lost & found)' and 'MeriSaheli (women's safety)'. Safeguarding railway assets from damage or theft and enforcing laws like the Railway Property (Unlawful Possession) Act and the NDPS Act (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act) for drug-related offences.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu dismissed Telangana CM Revanth Reddy's claim on halting Rayalaseema project.

Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu rejects Telangana CM's claim

AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday firmly rejected the claim made by his Telangana counterpart A. Revanth Reddy that the NDA-led government in Andhra Pradesh had halted the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Project at the latter's request. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP)-led government described the Telangana Chief Minister's remarks as factually incorrect and misleading.

The clarification came a day after Revanth Reddy, while replying to a short discussion on Krishna river waters in the Telangana Legislative Assembly, claimed that he had exerted pressure on both Chandrababu Naidu and the Central government to stop the Rayalaseema project. He further asserted that the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister had respected his request and halted the project accordingly.

Responding sharply, the Andhra Pradesh government stated that there was no truth whatsoever in the assertion that the project was stopped at the request of the Telangana Chief Minister or out of political consideration. Officials maintained that the suspension of the Rayalaseema Lift Project had nothing to do with the decisions of the present government or any inter-state political pressure.

During his address in the Assembly, Revanth Reddy claimed that he had made it clear to Chandrababu Naidu that he would be willing to discuss inter-state water-sharing issues only if Andhra Pradesh stopped the Rayalaseema project. He alleged that the project was drawing nearly three TMC of water per day from the Krishna River, adversely affecting Telangana's interests.

The Telangana Chief Minister also proposed sending a fact-finding committee comprising leaders from all political parties, including the opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), to verify whether work on the project had actually been stopped.

However, Andhra Pradesh government sources countered this narrative, reiterating that the project's current status was unrelated to any request from Telangana. They emphasised that the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Project has been subject to regulatory, technical, and legal considerations, and any pause or review was guided strictly by due process rather than political negotiations.

TMC distributes 15-year governance 'Report Card' across Bengal

KOLKATA

All India Trinamool Congress leadership has started distributing 'Unnayoner Panchali', the state government's report card for the past 15 years in power, to prominent personalities across West Bengal as part of their Banglar Samarthane Sanjog (outreach) initiative.

State Minister Shashi Panja and party MP Sharmila Sarkar presented the report card along with a letter from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to Professor Dr Manimoy Bandyopadhyay, Director of IPGMER and SSKM Hospital, hailing the contribution to West Bengal's public healthcare transformation.

Another Trinamool Congress MP, Nadimul Haque, met celebrated music composer Indraadip Dasgupta and presented him with the Unnayoner Panchali box and the Chief Minister's letter, reflecting on Bengal's transformative journey over the past 15 years.

As per sources, 200 such personalities from various fields ranging from arts, films, sports, academics and others will be reached out by the Trinamool leadership in the run-up to the state Assembly polls later this year. Trinamool Congress spokesperson Arup Chakraborty said the West Bengal government, led by Trinamool Congress, believes in maintaining transparency and therefore decided to reach out to people with a report card of good governance during the last 15 years.

Candidate arrested for using proxy for police recruitment exam

KOLKATA

The police have arrested the candidate who was to appear in the Kolkata Police recruitment examination for the post of Sub-Inspector but had sent a proxy. The police said on Sunday that the candidate, Abdul Khaleque, was arrested from Murshidabad district and produced in court, which remanded him to police custody till January 8. The police had already arrested the proxy candidate, named Lakhai Ghosh, on December 30, 2025.

According to police sources, Abdul Khaleque, a resident of Murshidabad district, had successfully cleared two stages of the Kolkata Police Sub-Inspector recruitment examination. However, he did not appear for the third stage, the written test, himself. A man named Lakhai Ghosh, also from his district, took the exam on his behalf.

Police arrested him red-handed at the examination centre in Kolkata. Based on the arrested man's confession, the actual candidate, for whom Ghosh was taking the exam, has now been arrested.

Both Khaleque and Ghosh are residents of Murshidabad. Gosh told the police that he and Khaleque were preparing for the exams together.

Gosh had also passed the WBCS (Preliminary) and PSC examinations. However, he claimed during interrogation that he needed money for further exam preparation and had taken money from Khaleque to take the test on his behalf.

Khaleque was produced in court. The judge ordered him to be remanded in police custody until January 8. The government lawyer Saurin Ghoshal stated that someone else had appeared for the exam on behalf of the accused in the third round. However, it needs to be determined whether he himself or someone else took the exam in the previous two rounds. The police are hopeful of obtaining this information by interrogating Khaleque. On December 30, Gosh sat for the exam at New Alipore College in South Kolkata. However, the examiner became suspicious because his face did not match the photograph on the admit card.

MUSTAQUE TAKES CHARGE

A. Mustaque sworn in as Chief Justice of Sikkim HC

GANGTOK

Justice A. Muhamed Mustaque was sworn in on Sunday as the Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court, marking a significant moment for the judiciary in the Himalayan state. The oath of office was administered by Sikkim Governor Om Prakash Mathur at a formal ceremony held at Lok Bhawan in Gangtok. The event was attended by judges of the High Court, senior government officials, members of the Bar, and other dignitaries.

Justice Mustaque's appointment was cleared by the Centre on January 3, following the recommendation of the Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, according to the official notification. The Union Ministry of Law and Justice, in its order, stated that the President of India had exercised powers under Article 217(1) of the Constitution to appoint Justice Muhamed Mustaque Ayumantakath, then a judge of the Kerala High Court, as Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court with effect from the date he assumed charge.

Born on June 1, 1967, Justice Mustaque hails from Thana in Kannur district of Kera-

la. He obtained his law degree from V.B. College of Law, Udupi, and later completed his Master of Laws (LL.M.) in Labour Law from Mahatma Gandhi University. He enrolled as an advocate on October 1, 1989, and practised for nearly seven years before various courts and statutory authorities in Kannur.

During his years at the Bar, Justice Mustaque developed a diverse legal practice, working as a litigation lawyer and arbitrator. He also served as a mediator at the Kerala Mediation Centre. His areas of expertise spanned civil, commercial, constitutional, administrative, service and criminal law, in addition to specialised fields such as telecommunication, intellectual property, and information technology law.

He has also contributed to legal education and alternative dispute resolution, serving as a faculty member for mediation training at the Indian Institute of Arbitration and Mediation (IIAM) and acting as a panel arbitrator with both IIAM and ICADR.

QUICK READ

Five arrested for assaulting woman cop

Raigarh

Police have arrested five accused in connection with the shocking assault on an on-duty female constable during a violent anti-coal mining protest in Tamnar block, Raigarh district in Chhattisgarh. The arrested individuals have been identified as Mangal Rathia, Chinesh Khamari, Premsingh Rathia, Kirti Shriwas (all residents of Amgaon village), and Vanmali Rathia (resident of Jharna village). Two others remain at large. Earlier police arrested two accused, and three were at large. A case (Crime No. 309/25) has been registered at Tamnar police station under serious sections of the Indian Penal Code and the IT Act for a life-threatening attack, beating with sticks and rods.

Govt initiates steps to seek CBI probe against Oppn leader

Thiruvananthapuram

Nearly a year after the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau submitted its report, the Kerala government has initiated steps to act on a recommendation seeking a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe against V.D. Satheesan, the leader of Opposition in the Kerala Assembly. The move comes at a time when the state is inching closer to the next Assembly elections, triggering sharp political reactions. The recommendation pertains to alleged irregularities in receiving foreign funds for the 'Punarjani' rehabilitation project implemented in his Paravur Assembly constituency following the devastating 2018 floods.

Security forces destroy ganja plants

Agartala

Security forces in Tripura, in two separate operations, have destroyed over 23 lakh ganja (marijuana) plants worth around Rs 108 crore in Tripura's Sepahijala district, officials said on Sunday. A police official said that personnel of the Tripura Police, Tripura State Rifles (TSR), Border Security Force (BSF), Forest Department and Excise Department, in two separate operations, destroyed more than 23 lakh ganja plants spread over 414 acres of mountainous land in Sepahijala district. In the ongoing anti-narcotics drive, the illicit ganja plants were destroyed in the Anandapur and Ghatigarh forest areas of Sepahijala district over the past three days, the official said.

Amit Shah will lead NDA to power in TN: A.N.S. Prasad

Tamil Nadu BJP spokesperson said Amit Shah will counter biased narratives and lead the NDA to victory in 2026.

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu BJP spokesperson A.N.S. Prasad on Sunday asserted that Union Home Minister Amit Shah would dismantle what he described as engineered opinion polls and biased political narratives and lead the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to power in the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections.

In a statement, Prasad strongly rejected recent opinion polls predicting a return of the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) to power with Chief Minister M. K. Stalin continuing in office. He referred specifically to a chief ministerial preference survey attributed to an alumni association, which reportedly projected actor Vijay ahead of AIADMK leader Edappadi K. Palaniswami.

Prasad alleged that such surveys were deliberately designed to shape public opinion and influence voter behaviour ahead of the elections. He claimed that opinion polls of this nature were being used as political tools rather than objective assessments of public sentiment.

The BJP spokesperson also criticised the categorisation of survey respondents on religious lines, describing the practice as divisive, unethical, and harmful to social harmony. He said such approaches undermine democratic values and fuel unnecessary polarisation in society.

According to Prasad, the NDA — comprising the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and the Bharatiya Janata Party — would emerge as a strong and credible alternative to the DMK in the 2026 Assembly polls. He accused the ruling party of corruption, misgovernance, and minority appeasement, alleging that issues such as rising prices, increasing crime, and the growing drug menace had worsened under the present government.

Prasad further claimed that the DMK and the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) were competing to consolidate minority votes, asserting that such politics would ultimately be rejected by the electorate. Tamil Nadu will not accept divisive politics that undermine cultural traditions and social unity, he said.

Recalling past electoral history, Prasad cited the 1991 Assembly elections, when the DMK was reduced to just two seats against the AIADMK led by J. Jayalalithaa. He expressed confidence that the BJP believes a similar electoral setback awaits the DMK in the 2026 Assembly elections.

Air Force marks 25 yrs of Tejas LCA's first flight

NEW DELHI

Indian Air Force commemorated 25 years of Tejas LCA's first flight, celebrating India's growing self-reliance in defence aviation.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) on Sunday marked the 25th anniversary of the historic first flight of the home-grown Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), a landmark moment in India's quest for self-reliance in defence aerospace. The IAF hailed the achievement as a testament to decades of sustained collaboration between scientists, engineers, test pilots and the armed forces.

In a post on social media platform X, the IAF said it was reflecting on an enduring partnership that helped build the indigenous fighter aircraft. The force congratulated scientists of the Aeronautical Development Agency, engineers of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, IAF and Indian Navy test pilots and engineers, and all personnel who championed the cause of Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing. Sky is the limit, the IAF said in its message.

The historic first flight of the Tejas LCA took place on January 4, 2001, when Wing Commander Rajiv Kothiyal flew the Technology Demonstrator-1 (TD-1) from Bengaluru's HAL Airport. That flight marked the beginning of an extensive and complex flight testing phase, which ultimately culminated in the induction of the Tejas into the IAF and the subsequent development of advanced variants, including the Tejas Mk1A.

The Light Combat Aircraft programme was originally conceived by the Government of India in 1983 with the objective of replacing the ageing fighter fleet of the IAF with a modern, agile and indigenous combat aircraft. Over the decades, the programme has evolved into one of India's most ambitious and strategically significant defence projects.

In a major boost to the programme, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) secured a landmark order in late 2025 for 97 additional Tejas Mk1A fighters, valued at over ₹62,370 crore. This order added to the existing contract for 83 aircraft, significantly strengthening the IAF's future combat capabilities.

Progress has also been made in expanding private sector participation. In May 2025, the first centre fuselage assembly for the Tejas Mk1A was handed over to HAL by VEM Technologies in Hyderabad, marking the first time a major sub-assembly for the LCA was manufactured by a private Indian company.

Odisha CM announces Rs 4 Lakh solatium

BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Sunday expressed deep sorrow over the death of an auto-rickshaw driver in a collision involving an 'Ama Bus', the state-owned public transport service operating in selected urban areas, at Rupali Square in Bhubaneswar. CM Majhi instructed the state Transport Department to take effective measures, in coordination with the Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT), to curb repeated accidents involving 'Ama Bus' services and to improve overall road safety.

According to the statement by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), conveying his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family, the Chief Minister announced an ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

He also wished a speedy recovery to the girl student who was injured in the accident.

Expressing serious concern over the recurring accidents involving 'Ama Bus' services, the Chief Minister directed the Transport Department to take effective measures in coordination with the CRUT to address the issue and improve road safety.

Emphasising the need to enhance the skills of 'Ama Bus' drivers, the Chief Minister instructed that regular training programmes be conducted. He stressed that such training should focus not only on driving skills but also on the physical and mental health of drivers.

Stalin to launch 'Ulagam Ungal Kaiyil' scheme today

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin will on Monday launch the first phase of his government's flagship digital empowerment initiative, Ulagam Ungal Kaiyil (The World in Your Hands), aimed at strengthening access to technology among college students across the state. The programme will be inaugurated at the Chennai Trade Centre at 3 p.m., with Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin also scheduled to attend the event.

Under the first phase of the scheme, the state government will distribute 10 lakh laptops to students pursuing higher education in government institutions.

Beneficiaries include students enrolled in government engineering colleges, arts and science colleges, medical colleges, agricultural universities, law colleges, polytechnics, and Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs).

The initiative forms part of a larger two-phase plan to provide a total of 20 lakh laptops to college students, a commitment announced earlier by the Chief Minister.

According to an official release, the scheme is designed to bridge the digital divide and ensure that students from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds are not left behind in an increasingly technology-driven education and employment landscape.

The programme builds on the Dravidian model government's student-centric welfare initiatives, such as Tamil Pudhalvan, Pudhumai Penn, the First Graduate Scholarship, Post-Matric Scholarships and Social Justice Hostels, an official statement said.

The laptops to be distributed under the scheme are sourced from leading global manufacturers, including Dell, Acer, and HP. Each device will be equipped with either an Intel i3 or AMD Ryzen 3 processor, 8 GB RAM, and 256 GB SSD storage. The laptops will come pre-installed with Windows 11, BOSS Linux and MS Office 365, along with a six-month free subscription to the AI-powered Perplexity Pro platform. Beneficiaries will also receive a high-quality laptop bag.

Gujarat's Legal Metrology Department carried out surprise inspections across jewellery shops, registering 253 cases to protect consumer interests.

Surprise checks on jewellery shops across Gujarat

GANDHINAGAR

In a major enforcement drive aimed at protecting consumer interests and ensuring transparency in trade, Gujarat's Legal Metrology Department conducted surprise inspections at gold and silver shops and jewellery showrooms across the state on January 2 and 3. Officials said the statewide operation covered nearly 370 establishments and resulted in 253 prosecution cases across 25 districts, along with the on-the-spot recovery of ₹6.79 lakh as compounding fees.

The special enforcement campaign was carried out under the guidance of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, and led by Consumer Affairs Minister Raman Solanki and Minister of State P. C. Baranda. The initiative forms part of the state government's broader efforts to curb unfair trade practices, ensure accurate weights and measures, and strengthen consumer confidence, particularly in high-value sectors such as jewellery.

According to the Legal Metrology Department, inspections were conducted across a wide range of districts, including Ahmedabad, Bharuch–Narmada, Junagadh–Gir Somnath, Bhavnagar–Botad, Surat, Gandhinagar, Vadodara, Patan, Chhota Udepur, Tapi, Valsad, Dang, Navsari, Anand, Kheda, Panchmahal, Dahod, Mahisagar, Porbandar, Amreli, Jamnagar, Devbhumi Dwarka, Surendranagar, Mehsana, Banaskantha–Palanpur, Sabarkantha–Himmatnagar, Aravalli–Modasa, Rajkot and Morbi.

Ahmedabad recorded the highest number of enforcement actions, with 22 cases registered after inspections at 61 establishments. This was followed by Bharuch–Narmada, where 25 cases were booked from 27 units, Junagadh–Gir Somnath with 20 cases from 21 units, Bhavnagar–Botad with 17 cases from 20 units, and Surat with 14 cases from 20 units.

Officials said the most common violations included the use of unverified or unstamped weighing instruments, short-weight delivery to customers, failure to carry out mandatory verification and stamping, possession of uncertified standard weights, and non-display of valid verification certificates at business premises.

The department confirmed that all compounding fees were collected on the spot through digital modes such as e-POS machines, UPI-based payments, and cheques, ensuring transparency and accountability in the enforcement process.

Gujarat's wetlands saw over 8.33 lakh migratory birds

GANDHINAGAR

Gujarat's wetlands recorded more than 8.33 lakh birds during 2024–25, reaffirming Gujarat's position as one of India's safest and most preferred destinations for avian visitors. According to official data, Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary alone recorded over 3.09 lakh birds belonging to 334 species in the past year.

Meanwhile, the combined count at the Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary and the Thol Bird Sanctuary crossed 4.67 lakh birds, while Wadhwana Wetland registered more than 54,000 birds.

The Kutch region recorded 2,564 migratory birds in 2025, underscoring its growing importance on international flyways. Globally, of the nearly 9,000 bird species, about 1,200 species are found in India, including over 400 migratory species. These birds travel thousands of kilometres from Siberia, Eastern Europe, North Asia and Central Asia, choosing Gujarat's wetlands as seasonal shelters.

Officials attribute this sustained rise in migratory bird numbers to Gujarat's long-standing conservation framework.

Wildlife protection initiatives strengthened during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure as Gujarat Chief Minister have been consistently carried forward under Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, supported by firm enforcement, habitat protection and community participation.

Under the guidance of Forest and Environment Minister Arjun Modhwadia and Minister of State Pravin Mali, the Forest Department and wildlife organisations have undertaken sustained conservation and habitat management efforts. At Khijadiya, species such as flamingos, pelicans, painted storks, ibises, spoonbills, ducks, geese, eagles, kites, kingfishers and herons were prominently recorded.

As per the 2023 population estimate, Gujarat is also home to over 2.85 lakh peafowl, India's national bird. Declared a sanctuary in 1969 and recognised as a Ramsar Site in 2012, Nal Sarovar spans 120.82 sq km and lies on the Central Asian Flyway, attracting 329 recorded bird species, including passage migrants that halt briefly during long-distance journeys.

Indian army chief begins official visit to UAE

NEW DELHI

India's Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Sunday departed for an official two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), marking an important step in strengthening bilateral military and strategic cooperation. The visit highlights growing defence collaboration under the broader India-UAE strategic partnership, which has expanded through high-level engagements and joint initiatives in recent years.

The Indian Army said the visit reflects a shared commitment to deepening mutual understanding and enhancing defence cooperation in areas of common interest. General Dwivedi's trip underscores India's focus on military diplomacy with key Gulf partners, a region vital for security, economic and geopolitical interests.

India and the UAE share a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, with defence cooperation emerging as a core pillar alongside trade and energy ties. The visit is expected to include meetings with senior UAE military officials to explore cooperation in defence innovation, joint exercises and strategic dialogue.

Recently, Indian Army personnel participated in the second edition of the joint military exercise 'Desert Cyclone-II' in Abu Dhabi to enhance interoperability and operational coordination.

LALU'S PLEA IN COURT

Delhi High Court to hear Lalu Prasad Yadav's Plea

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court is expected to take up on Monday a petition filed by former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, challenging a trial court order directing the framing of cheating and corruption charges against him and his family members in the IRCTC hotel scam case. The matter is listed before Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma.

In his criminal revision petition, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief has contended that there are insufficient grounds to proceed against the accused for offences related to corruption, criminal conspiracy and cheating. He has sought the setting aside of the order passed by the Rouse Avenue Court, which cleared the way for a full-fledged trial in the case.

The plea specifically challenges the decision of the Rouse Avenue Courts, which ordered the framing of charges against Lalu Prasad Yadav, his son Tejashwi Yadav, his wife Rabri Devi, and other accused persons. The order was passed by Special Judge (PC Act) Vishal Gogne on October 13, 2025.

The trial court had directed that charges be framed under Sections 420 (cheating) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code, along with provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act. The accused had pleaded not guilty to the charges, following which the court paved the way for the commencement of trial proceedings.

The case pertains to alleged irregularities in the allotment of two hotels of the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) during Lalu Prasad Yadav's tenure as Union Railway Minister. The prosecution has alleged that undue benefits were extended to private parties in exchange for favours, an allegation consistently denied by the accused.

The special court had reserved its order on May 29, 2025, after hearing detailed arguments from both sides on the question of framing charges. Apart from members of the Yadav family, the case also involves other accused, including Prem Gupta, Sarla Gupta, and former railway officials Rakesh Saksena and P. K. Goyal.

QUICK READ

Drone strike near Russian border kills one civilian

Moscow

One man was killed and two others were hurt after a Ukrainian drone hit a car in Russia's Belgorod border region, officials said Sunday. The injured include a woman and a four year old child, both taken to hospital in serious condition. Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said firefighters put out flames after the vehicle caught fire. Russia's defence ministry reported shooting down dozens of Ukrainian drones across the country, including some heading toward Moscow. Reuters could not independently confirm the claims. Belgorod and nearby areas have often faced cross border attacks

Protests shake Gilgit-Baltistan

Islamabad

Protests erupted in Pakistan-occupied Gilgit-Baltistan after controversial figures were named to the caretaker government. Youth activists led demonstrations in Chinarbagh, while similar protests were announced in Ghanche, Nagar, and Shigar. Protesters said the appointments aimed to influence upcoming elections and demanded educated, neutral representatives. A sit-in was announced until the decision is withdrawn. Roads were blocked during the protest, and police detained eight demonstrators, including a youth leader. Analysts say elections will lack meaning without constitutional rights, local authority over resources, and fair political representation. Residents say continued unrest reflects long-standing anger over governance, identity, and political exclusion in region.

North Korea fires missiles as Seoul leader travels

North Korea's missile launches signal China to avoid closer South Korea ties and assert nuclear power to the U.S

SEOUL

North Korea fired ballistic missiles on Sunday, raising tensions as South Korea's president began a state visit to China. The launches came at a sensitive time, with global concern already high after recent United States military action in Venezuela.

South Korea and Japan said at least two missiles were launched from near Pyongyang into waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. Japanese officials said the missiles travelled about 900 to 950 kilometres. This was North Korea's first missile test in nearly two months.

Analysts said the timing of the launches was not accidental. They believe North Korea wanted to send a clear message to China, its long time ally, warning against stronger ties with South Korea. Others said the missile tests were also aimed at the United States, showing that North Korea sees itself as a powerful nuclear state that cannot be treated like weaker nations.

South Korea's presidential office confirmed it held an emergency security meeting soon after the launches. Officials strongly condemned the action and urged North Korea to stop activities that violate United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Japan also protested sharply. Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said the missile launches threaten peace and security in the region and beyond. The United States military said the launches did not pose an immediate threat to American forces or allies, but added that it was closely consulting with partners.

The missile tests followed recent visits by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to weapons factories, where he called for increased arms production. Analysts say Kim is showing military strength ahead of an important ruling party meeting later this year.

US monitors North Korea missiles, backs allies

WASHINGTON: The United States said it is aware of North Korea's recent missile launches and remains committed to defending its regional allies. The Indo-Pacific Command said the launches do not pose an immediate threat to American territory or forces. The missiles were fired toward the East Sea, marking Pyongyang's first test this year. Officials said consultations with partners are ongoing. The development comes amid rising tensions on the Korean Peninsula and growing military ties between North Korea and Russia. South Korean officials have warned that such cooperation increases regional instability and challenges international security across the wider region.

Myanmar Junta announces release of prisoners

YANGON

Myanmar's military government announced on Sunday that it will release more than 6,000 prisoners as part of an annual amnesty marking the country's Independence Day. Myanmar is celebrating 78 years of independence from British colonial rule.

The National Defence and Security Council said junta leader Min Aung Hlaing has pardoned 6,134 Myanmar nationals. In a separate statement, authorities said 52 foreign prisoners will also be freed and deported. The council described the move as being taken on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Families gathered outside Yangon's Insein Prison early Sunday, hoping to reunite with their loved ones. Many waited for hours, holding papers with prisoners' names. One man said he was waiting for his father, who was jailed for political activities. He said his father's sentence was almost over and hoped he would be released soon. The man asked not to be named due to security fears.

Since the military coup in February 2021, thousands of protesters, activists, and political opponents have been arrested. The takeover ended a short period of democratic rule and pushed the country into a long and violent conflict.

Since the February 2021 military coup, thousands of protesters and activists were arrested, ending brief democratic rule and plunging the country into prolonged, violent conflict

The amnesty comes as the junta continues a phased national election that began last week. Military leaders claim the vote will restore democracy, but rights groups and Western governments have criticised it as unfair.

Early official results show the military backed Union Solidarity and Development Party winning most seats announced so far. The National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, was dissolved and did not contest the election. Suu Kyi remains in prison.

Delcy Rodriguez named Interim President after Maduro capture

CARACAS

Venezuela's Supreme Court named Vice President Delcy Rodriguez interim president after a US operation captured President Nicolas Maduro and his wife. Citing Maduro's "forced absence," the court said the move ensures continuity, security and state functioning, with broader measures to follow. Rodriguez, 56, a close Maduro ally, has served as vice president, finance and oil minister, steering the economy under sanctions. She rejected US actions, accusing Washington of aggression.

The total confirmed victims in Switzerland's disaster rose to eight, following four identified earlier, as investigations continue

4 more Swiss bar fire victims named

ZURICH

Swiss police on Sunday confirmed the identification of four more people who died in a deadly bar fire that killed 40 people during New Year's Eve celebrations in the alpine resort town of Crans-Montana.

Valais cantonal police said the victims include two Swiss women aged 24 and 22, and two Swiss men aged 21 and 18. Their bodies have been formally identified and returned to their families. Authorities did not release further personal details out of respect for relatives.

With the latest confirmation, the total number of victims identified has risen to eight. Police had identified four other bodies a day earlier as investigations continue into one of the worst disasters in Switzerland's recent history.

The blaze broke out late on December 31 at the Le Constellation bar, a popular venue crowded with people celebrating the New Year. The fire and explosion spread rapidly, leaving little time for escape and causing widespread panic among those inside.

In addition to the deaths, around 119 people were injured. Many suffered serious burns and were transferred to specialised burn treatment centres in Switzerland and other European countries. Medical teams continue to care for survivors, some of whom remain in critical condition.

Police said efforts to identify the remaining victims are ongoing, using forensic tests and support from international experts. Authorities are also working to match injured people with missing persons reports filed by families.

Meanwhile, prosecutors have opened a criminal investigation into the operators of the bar. Two people who managed the venue are being investigated on suspicion of offences including homicide by negligence.

Tributes, flowers, and candles have been placed near the bar as the nation mourns. Officials said support services remain available for victims' families and survivors as the community struggles to recover from the tragedy.

China demands US free Venezuela leader immediately

SHANGHAI

China on Sunday urged the United States to immediately release Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, saying their detention and deportation violate international law and accepted global norms.

In a statement posted on its official website, China's Foreign Ministry said Washington should ensure the personal safety of Maduro and his wife and resolve the Venezuela situation through dialogue and negotiation, not force. Beijing warned that military actions and arrests of foreign leaders set a dangerous example for international relations.

China strongly criticised the US operation that led to Maduro's capture, calling it a clear violation of international law. The ministry said such actions undermine the principles of sovereignty and non interference that guide relations between nations.

"China calls on the United States to ensure the personal safety of President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, release them at once, and stop efforts to overthrow the government of Venezuela," the statement said. It added that political disputes must be handled through peaceful talks rather than coercive measures.

Beijing stressed that the future of Venezuela should be decided by its own people, without outside pressure or intervention. It also warned that ignoring international rules could increase instability not only in Latin America but across the world.

The comments come amid rising global tension following the US action in Caracas, which has drawn sharp reactions from several countries and international organisations. China has consistently opposed unilateral military actions and has called for respect for the United Nations Charter.

Analysts say China's response reflects its broader stance against regime change led by foreign powers. Beijing has maintained diplomatic ties with Caracas and has often supported Venezuela in international forums.

Britain, France launch joint air strike in Syria

LONDON

Britain said its air force, working with France, carried out a joint military strike in Syria targeting a suspected underground weapons storage site previously used by the Islamic State group. The operation took place on Saturday evening, according to the defence ministry. Intelligence indicated the site, located in mountainous terrain north of Palmyra, was being used to store weapons and explosives. British Typhoon FGR4 jets dropped Paveway IV precision-guided bombs on access tunnels leading into the underground facility, with a Voyager aircraft providing refuelling support. An assessment of the strike is ongoing, though early indications suggest the target was successfully hit. Britain said the area was uninhabited, minimising civilian risk, and all aircraft returned safely. Defence Secretary John Healey said the action underlined Britain's commitment to working with allies to prevent Islamic State, or Daesh, from rebuilding its capabilities and threatening regional and international security.

Three Palestinians killed amid ongoing Gaza tensions

CAIRO

Israeli forces killed three Palestinians in separate shooting incidents in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, according to local health officials. Medics said the victims included a 15 year old boy, a fisherman, and another man who was shot east of the city in an area under Israeli control. The deaths happened during a tense period despite a ceasefire that began in October.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the incidents. Israel has continued air strikes and security operations since the truce started, saying the actions are meant to stop attacks and destroy militant sites.

Gaza's health ministry says at least 420 Palestinians have been killed since the ceasefire took effect. During the same period, Palestinian militants have killed three Israeli soldiers. Both Israel and Hamas have accused each other of breaking the agreement.

Under the first stage of a plan backed by former United States President Donald Trump, Israel kept control of about 53 percent of Gaza. The deal also included the release of hostages held in Gaza and Palestinians held in Israeli prisons.

The final hostage yet to be returned is an Israeli police officer killed during the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	3			1			2	
5		9	6		2	1		8
	1			5			6	
	5			8			9	
9		3	7		6	8		1
	8			9			4	
	7			2			1	
3		1	5		9	4		2
	9			6			3	

4	6	5	8	7	2	3	9	1
8	9	2	1	3	6	5	4	7
7	1	3	4	9	5	6	2	8
2	4	1	6	5	8	7	3	9
3	8	6	9	4	7	2	1	5
5	7	9	2	1	3	8	6	4
9	2	7	3	8	4	1	5	6
1	3	8	5	6	9	4	7	2
6	5	4	7	2	1	9	8	3

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

UN CRISIS SESSION

UN Council calls emergency meet on Venezuela

NEW YORK

The United Nations Security Council will hold an emergency meeting on Monday (today) to discuss the recent United States operation in Venezuela, according to the council presidency.

The meeting is planned for Monday morning at 10 a.m., said Khadija Ahmed, spokeswoman for Somalia's Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Somalia holds the rotating presidency of the Security Council for January.

The move follows a surprise US military action carried out early Saturday in Caracas. During the operation, American forces captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, from a military location in the capital.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said he is deeply alarmed by the development and warned that the action sets a dangerous example. His spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said the secretary general is worried the military move could have serious effects across the region.

The United Nations chief stressed that, regardless of Venezuela's internal situation, international law must be fully respected. He expressed concern that key rules under the UN Charter may have been ignored.

Guterres called for calm and urged all sides to choose inclusive dialogue over force. He also underlined the need to protect human rights and uphold the rule of law during any political process.

According to US officials, elite Delta Force units attacked an army base before taking Maduro and his wife into custody. The couple were later moved onto a US warship.

They are being transported to New York, where federal prosecutors have filed charges linked to alleged narco terrorism. The emergency council meeting is expected to draw sharp debate and global attention closely in coming days worldwide.

QUICK READ

GDP, US jobs, Venezuela tensions to move markets

Mumbai

The Indian stock market is expected to stay active in the coming sessions as investors assess a combination of domestic economic signals and global developments. With the Q3 earnings season approaching, market sentiment will be guided by key data releases, geopolitical developments and trends in commodities and currencies. Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, an analyst said that on the upside, immediate resistance is placed at 26,400, followed by 26,500 and 26,600, while on the downside, support is seen at 26,200 and then at 26,100. A deeper breakdown below 26,000 could invite additional downside pressure, analyst stated.

Govt to continue fostering comprehensive fisheries development

New Delhi

The government on Sunday said it has set in motion a series of transformative initiatives aimed at fostering the comprehensive development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector within the country. Over the years, there has been a significant upswing in central government investments dedicated to this sector. From the initiation of this endeavour in 2015, the cumulative investments, totalling an impressive Rs 38,572 crore, have been approved or announced across various schemes. Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Rajiv Ranjan Singh, is set to inaugurate the Smart Green Aquaculture Farm and Research Institute.

DGCA bans use of power banks for charging devices during flights

New Delhi

The Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Sunday clarified that passengers are not allowed to use power banks to charge mobile phones or any other electronic devices during flights, citing serious safety concerns linked to lithium batteries. In a statement, the aviation regulator said power banks cannot be used for charging gadgets at any time during a flight, including through aircraft seat power outlets. The move comes after several incidents worldwide in which lithium batteries overheated or caught fire on board aircraft.

HPCL Commissions Residue Upgradation Facility at Visakh Refinery

Bharat strengthens its energy security push as HPCL successfully commissions a state-of-the-art residue upgradation facility at Visakh Refinery

VISAKHAPATNAM

Bharat's long-term journey toward achieving energy security reached a significant milestone with the successful commissioning of the Residue Upgradation Facility (RUF) at the Visakh Refinery of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited in Andhra Pradesh. Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri announced the development on Sunday, describing it as a decisive step toward building a self-reliant energy ecosystem in the country.

Sharing the update on social media platform X, the minister said the commissioning of the facility represents a major boost to Bharat's energy security ambitions and aligns with the vision of Narendra Modi for an Aatmanirbhar Bharat. He also acknowledged the support of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, stating that the project reflects strong cooperation between the Centre and the state in strengthening critical infrastructure.

The Residue Upgradation Facility at the Visakh Refinery has been designed to convert low-value refinery residue into high-value petroleum products through advanced residue hydrocracking technology. With an installed capacity of 3.55 million metric tonnes per annum, the facility can achieve an impressive conversion rate of around 93 per cent. This enables refineries to maximise output from every barrel of crude oil, significantly improving efficiency and overall productivity.

Highlighting the technological and engineering achievement behind the project, the minister noted that the facility stands out for its strong focus on indigenous engineering and manufacturing. The RUF houses three LC-Max reactors, each weighing nearly 2,200 metric tonnes, making them among the heaviest engineering blocks in the world. Importantly, these massive reactors were fabricated and assembled entirely within Bharat, underlining the country's growing capabilities in executing highly complex industrial projects.

According to the ministry, the commissioning of the RUF is expected to enhance fuel efficiency, increase refinery output, and reduce dependence on imported petroleum products by extracting greater value from existing crude supplies. Such projects, officials said, are crucial for supporting India's fast-growing economy while meeting rising energy demand in a sustainable and cost-effective manner.

Gautam Adani Reaffirms Long-Term Energy Partnership with Bhutan

AHMEDABAD

Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani reaffirmed commitment to Bhutan, highlighting strengthened hydropower cooperation rooted in sustainability and trust

Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani on Sunday said the conglomerate will continue to deepen its partnership with Bhutan, describing the collaboration as one founded on sustainability, mutual trust, and long-term value creation. He lauded the growing energy partnership with the Himalayan nation, particularly in the hydropower sector, as a significant milestone for both sides.

In a post on social media platform X, Adani said it was always a pleasure to return to Bhutan and expressed pride in being associated with transformative national initiatives. Deeply privileged to be a founding member of the Gelephu Mindfulness City. Indeed, a visionary initiative of His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck that reflects Bhutan's enduring commitment to mindful and sustainable development, he wrote.

Highlighting progress in the bilateral energy relationship, Adani said that key milestones had been achieved through the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the joint development of 5,000 MW of hydropower capacity. He also announced the official commencement of the 570 MW Wangchhu Hydro Electricity Project, calling it a major step forward in the partnership.

Adani expressed gratitude for the presence of Bhutan's Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay at the ceremony marking the occasion, reiterating that the Adani Group remains committed to strengthening ties grounded in sustainability and long-term cooperation.

The hydropower collaboration builds on an MoU signed in May last year to jointly develop 5,000 MW of projects in Bhutan. The agreement was signed by Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC) Managing Director Dasho Chhewang Rinzin and Adani Green Hydro Ltd's Chief Operating Officer Naresh Telgu, in the presence of senior Bhutanese leadership. Under the arrangement for the Wangchhu Hydropower Project, DGPC will hold a majority 51 per cent stake, while the Adani Group will own the remaining 49 per cent.

Bhogapuram Greenfield International Airport marked a milestone as its first commercial validation flight landed successfully on Sunday

First Commercial Validation Flight Lands at Bhogapuram Airport

VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra Pradesh's aviation landscape entered a new phase on Sunday with the successful landing of the first commercial validation flight at the Bhogapuram Greenfield International Airport in Vizianagaram district. The milestone event is being seen as a major step toward operational readiness of the state's upcoming international airport and a significant boost to regional connectivity in north coastal Andhra Pradesh.

The validation flight, operated by Air India, arrived from New Delhi and touched down safely at the Bhogapuram Airport, located about 50 kilometres from Visakhapatnam. Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu, Vizianagaram Member of Parliament Kalisetti Appala Naidu, and senior aviation and government officials were on board the test flight, underscoring the importance of the occasion.

The aircraft landed on the airport's 3.8-kilometre-long runway, which is the longest runway in the country and has been constructed using the latest aviation and safety technologies. Officials said the successful landing validated the airport's infrastructure, navigation systems, and operational preparedness ahead of its formal inauguration.

The Bhogapuram Greenfield International Airport is being developed by the GMR Group under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model on a design, build, finance, operate and transfer basis. The project is being executed by GMR Visakhapatnam International Airport Limited (GVIAL), a subsidiary of the GMR Group. Spread across 2,200 acres, the airport is being built at an estimated cost of ₹4,592 crore.

According to GVIAL, nearly 96 per cent of the construction work has already been completed. Addressing the gathering after the test flight, Ram Mohan Naidu said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to inaugurate the airport within the next four to five months, with June being the tentative timeline.

The Civil Aviation Minister said the Bhogapuram Airport would change the face of North Coastal Andhra by significantly improving air connectivity and attracting investment.

AAP'S RAGHAV CHADHA HAILS CENTRE'S DRAFT SOCIAL SECURITY

NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha member Raghav Chadha has welcomed the Central government's draft Social Security Rules, notified on December 30, 2025, under the Code on Social Security, 2020, describing them as a crucial first step towards recognition, protection, and dignity for millions of gig workers and delivery partners.

In a social media post, Chadha congratulated the workers: Congratulations to all Gig Workers and Delivery Partners. There is good news for you. The Central Government's draft Social Security Rules are the first step towards recognition, protection, and respect for your work.

He wrote that while platforms like Zomato, Swiggy, and Blinkit may not have listened to your voices, the people of this country and the government certainly did, calling it a small victory, but a significant one.

In a detailed video message posted on X, Chadha emphasised collective effort, This development didn't happen just because I, as a Member of Parliament, raised your concerns in Parliament it happened because all of you courageously raised your voices. The platforms and companies may not have listened, but the government and the people of this country certainly did. This deserves our appreciation.

Explaining the rules simply, he outlined key benefits: First, whether you work part-time or full-time as a gig worker, you will now get formal recognition as a worker. Second, if you work with one platform for at least 90 days in a year, or across multiple platforms for 120 days cumulatively, you become eligible for social security benefits. He added, There will be mandatory registration on a government portal. This will give you a Universal Account Number and a digital ID card -- official government recognition of your work. No longer can any company hide behind secretive algorithms to erase your identity or block you unfairly.

Pakistan's investment crisis deepens

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's investment climate is facing a deepening crisis, with fresh data and recent developments showing that the country is struggling to attract both local and foreign capital despite repeated policy initiatives. Pakistan's investment-to-GDP ratio remains stuck at around 13.1 per cent, far below the regional average of over 30 per cent.

This places Pakistan among the weakest performers in its neighbourhood, where higher investment levels have helped economies boost growth, productivity and competitiveness. Economists say this gap reflects long-standing structural problems rather than short-term economic shocks.

The situation has cast a shadow over the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), which was launched two years ago with the promise of fast-tracking large investments and cutting through bureaucratic hurdles.

Backed by both civilian and military leadership, the SIFC was projected as a powerful platform that could revive Pakistan's slowing economy by attracting foreign capital.

However, two years on, the council's performance has fallen well short of expectations. Despite its broad authority and high-level support, the SIFC has failed to deliver significant investment inflows. While several high-profile meetings and announcements were made, most proposed projects remain stuck at the discussion stage.

India's MHCV Segment Shows Signs of a Fresh Upcycle

MUMBAI

India's medium and heavy commercial vehicle (MHCV) segment appears to be entering a new upcycle after several years of subdued and uneven performance, supported by improving freight economics, an ageing vehicle fleet, regulatory tailwinds and a gradual correction of GST-related distortions. Market analysts and brokerages say the recovery, while still sensitive to freight rates, is now looking more structurally grounded than earlier false starts witnessed in the past few years.

Despite recent improvements, MHCV volumes remain well below their historical highs, highlighting the depth of the prolonged downturn. Industry volumes currently stand at around 419,000 units, still short of the FY19 peak. However, conditions on the ground are steadily improving, with better utilisation levels and healthier cash flows for fleet operators.

In a recent sector note, global brokerage Nomura said the MHCV industry is entering the early stages of an upcycle. The firm forecast volume growth of around 8 per cent in FY26, accelerating to nearly 10 per cent in FY27 as vehicle utilisation improves and replacement demand gathers momentum. Based on these assumptions, Nomura estimates MHCV volumes at about 404,000 units in FY26, rising to 444,000 units in FY27 and further to 466,000 units in FY28.

One of the most significant shifts underpinning the recovery has been the improvement in fleet operator economics. Lower upfront vehicle costs following GST cuts estimated at around 8 per cent have reduced loan EMIs, easing financial pressure on transporters. At the same time, freight rates have stabilised after years of oversupply, improving profitability across the sector. This has encouraged small and mid-sized operators, who had largely stayed away from fresh purchases, to reconsider replacement and expansion plans.

Industry leaders have echoed this cautiously optimistic outlook. Tata Motors Managing Director and CEO Girish Wagh acknowledged the shift during the company's Q2 FY26 post-results call. We are seeing early signs of stability in the MHCV market, Wagh said, adding that fleet utilisation has improved and operator cash flows are stronger than a year ago — a critical factor for reviving replacement demand.

VENEZUELA STARLINK SUPPORT

1-Month Free Starlink Internet for Venezuela: Musk

CARACAS

Tesla and SpaceX chief Elon Musk on Sunday announced that his satellite-based internet service Starlink will provide free broadband access to people across Venezuela for a period of one month, citing the need to ensure uninterrupted connectivity during a time of heightened political and security uncertainty.

Sharing the announcement on social media platform X, Musk said the decision was taken in support of the people of Venezuela. According to the post, Starlink will provide free broadband service through February 3, helping residents remain connected despite ongoing disruptions. Starlink operates via a constellation of low-Earth orbit satellites, allowing it to deliver internet access in areas where traditional telecommunications infrastructure is unreliable or disrupted.

The move comes amid a tense period in Venezuela marked by political turmoil and uncertainty. Musk's statement followed online reports and claims circulating internationally regarding developments involving Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Musk publicly reacted to those

claims, expressing optimism that Venezuela could move toward prosperity without Maduro in power. Writing in Spanish, Musk said the country could now have the prosperity it deserves. The comments drew attention due to Musk's long-standing criticism of the Maduro administration. Over the years, the billionaire entrepreneur has repeatedly blamed Venezuela's prolonged economic collapse, hyperinflation, and mass emigration on government policies and authoritarian governance. His views have often aligned with critics of the Maduro regime in the United States and elsewhere.

Musk's reaction also referenced statements made by former US President Donald Trump, who has taken a hardline stance against the Venezuelan government during his tenure. While official confirmation of recent claims remains unclear, Musk's announcement on Starlink assistance has been positioned as a humanitarian and connectivity-focused intervention rather than a political operation.

Starlink has previously been deployed in crisis-hit and conflict-affected regions to restore communication during emergencies, natural disasters, and wars. Observers say the temporary free service in Venezuela could play a crucial role in helping citizens access news, communicate safely, and maintain essential digital services during an uncertain period.

Water Contamination Problem in India: A Crisis Threatening Millions

Water is life's most fundamental necessity, yet for millions of Indians, access to clean, safe drinking water remains an elusive dream. Despite significant economic growth and technological advancement, India faces one of the world's most severe water contamination crises. This problem affects not just rural villages but also sprawling metropolitan areas, cutting across socioeconomic boundaries and threatening public health, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

Water contamination in India manifests through various forms, each posing distinct health risks and requiring different remediation approaches. Understanding these sources is crucial for developing effective solutions.

The Scope of the Crisis

India is home to approximately 18 percent of the world's population but possesses only 4 percent of the world's freshwater resources. This disparity would be challenging enough on its own, but the situation becomes dire when considering that a substantial portion of available water is contaminated and unfit for human consumption. According to various studies and government reports, nearly 70 percent of India's water supply is contaminated, making water-related diseases one of the leading causes of illness and death in the country. The contamination affects both surface water sources like rivers, lakes, and ponds, as well as groundwater accessed through wells and tube wells. Rivers that were once considered sacred and pure now carry toxic loads of industrial effluents, agricultural runoff, and untreated sewage. The Ganges, Yamuna, Brahmaputra, and countless other water bodies have become repositories of pollution rather than sources of life-sustaining water.

Types and Sources of Contamination

Biological Contamination

The most widespread form of water contamination in India is biological pollution caused by pathogens including bacteria, viruses, and parasites. This contamination primarily results from inadequate sewage treatment and open defecation practices. Despite progress through initiatives like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, a significant portion of human waste still finds its way into water sources without proper treatment.

Urban areas discharge millions of liters of untreated or partially treated sewage into rivers and lakes daily. Cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Bangalore collectively generate thousands of millions of liters of sewage daily, but treatment capacity falls far short of demand. This sewage contains harmful pathogens that cause diseases like cholera, typhoid, dysentery, hepatitis, and gastroenteritis.

Chemical Contamination

Industrial growth, while driving economic development, has introduced dangerous chemical pollutants into India's water systems. Factories and industrial units discharge heavy metals like arsenic, lead, mercury, chromium, and cadmium into water bodies. Textile industries release dyes and chemicals, tanneries discharge chromium, and pharmaceutical companies contribute complex chemical compounds that resist natural degradation.

The chemical industry belts around major cities have turned local water sources into toxic streams. In states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal, industrial clusters have severely contaminated groundwater, rendering it unfit for any use. Communities living near these industrial zones face elevated risks of cancer, neurological disorders, and developmental problems in children.

Agricultural Runoff

Agriculture, India's largest employment sector, contributes significantly to water contamination through the excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The Green Revolution, while boosting food production, encouraged intensive use of agrochemicals. These chemicals leach into groundwater or wash into surface water during monsoons, carrying nitrogen, phosphorus, and toxic pesticides. Nitrate contamination from fertilizers is particularly concerning in agricultural states like Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. High nitrate levels in drinking water cause methemoglobinemia or blue baby syndrome in infants and have been linked to certain cancers in adults. Pesticide residues in water affect the nervous system, disrupt hormones, and accumulate in the food chain.

Arsenic and Fluoride

Natural geological contamination presents another severe challenge. Arsenic contamination affects groundwater in parts of West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, and other states, exposing millions to this highly toxic element. Chronic arsenic exposure causes skin lesions, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and various cancers. The arsenic belt in West Bengal and Bangladesh represents one of the world's largest mass poisonings through groundwater.

Fluoride contamination, while different in origin, affects even more people across India. Excessive fluoride in drinking water causes dental and skeletal fluorosis, weakening bones and teeth. States like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu have extensive fluoride-affected areas. Children are particularly vulnerable, suffering permanent damage to developing teeth and bones.

Emerging Contaminants

Modern lifestyles introduce new pollutants into water systems. Pharmaceutical residues from hospitals and households, microplastics from plastic waste, personal care products, and endocrine-disrupting chemicals are increasingly detected in Indian water sources. These emerging contaminants pose unknown long-term health risks and are difficult to remove through conventional water treatment methods.

Health Impacts

The human cost of water contamination in India is staggering and multi-dimensional. Water-borne diseases claim thousands of lives annually and sicken millions more, with children and the elderly being most vulnerable.

Diarrheal diseases alone cause significant mortality, particularly among children under five years of age. Beyond immediate gastrointestinal illnesses, contaminated water contributes to malnutrition, stunted growth, and cognitive impairment in children. When children repeatedly fall ill from water-borne diseases, they miss school, affecting educational outcomes and long-term development.

Chronic exposure to chemical contaminants produces insidious health effects that may not manifest for years or decades. Arsenic and fluoride poisoning cause irreversible damage. Heavy metals accumulate in organs, causing kidney damage, liver disease, and neurological problems. Pesticide exposure has been linked to increased cancer rates in agricultural communities and birth defects in children born to exposed mothers.

The health burden extends beyond physical ailments. Families caring for sick members face economic hardship from medical expenses and lost wages. Communities dealing with widespread contamination suffer reduced quality of life and limited economic opportunities, as industries and skilled workers avoid heavily polluted areas.

Economic and Social Consequences

Water contamination imposes substantial economic costs on India's development. Healthcare expenditure for treating water-related diseases diverts resources from other priorities. Lost productivity when workers fall ill reduces economic output. Agricultural productivity suffers when contaminated water affects crop growth and soil health.

Tourism, particularly religious tourism centered around rivers like the Ganges, suffers as water quality deteriorates. Real estate values decline in contaminated areas, and businesses hesitate to invest in regions with severe water problems. The cumulative economic impact runs into billions of dollars annually, money that could otherwise fuel development and poverty reduction.

Socially, water contamination exacerbates inequality. Wealthy urban residents can afford bottled water, water purifiers, and medical care, while poor rural and urban communities bear the brunt of contamination. Women and girls, traditionally responsible for water collection in many households, spend hours fetching water from distant sources when local supplies are contaminated, limiting their educational and economic opportunities.

The Path Forward

Addressing India's water contamination crisis requires comprehensive, sustained action across multiple fronts. First, infrastructure development must accelerate. Every city and town needs adequate sewage treatment capacity. Industrial zones require common effluent treatment plants. Rural areas need decentralized water purification systems suited to local conditions.

Regulatory enforcement must improve significantly. Polluters should face meaningful penalties that outweigh profits from non-compliance. Real-time monitoring of industrial discharges and water quality can enable rapid response to contamination events. Public disclosure of water quality data empowers communities to demand accountability.

Agricultural practices need transformation toward sustainability. Promoting organic farming, precision agriculture that minimizes chemical use, and proper management of agricultural waste can reduce runoff contamination. Farmer education programs should emphasize the long-term costs of excessive agrochemical use. Technology offers promising solutions. Advanced water treatment technologies, affordable point-of-use purification devices, bioremediation techniques, and innovative pollution control methods can help. However, technology must be accessible and appropriate for India's diverse contexts, from megacities to remote villages.

Community participation is essential. Local water user associations, citizen monitoring groups, and public awareness campaigns can create grassroots pressure for clean water. Traditional water management practices that sustained communities for centuries deserve revival alongside modern techniques.

Making strong efforts to host the 2036 Olympics: PM Modi

PM says mega sporting events will boost Indian athletes' exposure

VARANASI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India is preparing with full strength to host the 2036 Olympic Games, asserting that the government's push to bring major sporting events to the country is aimed at giving "more and more players greater opportunities to compete."

Addressing the inauguration of the 72nd Senior National Volleyball Championship in Varanasi via video conferencing, the Prime Minister said India's growing ambition in global sport reflects a wider transformation in the country's outlook over the past decade. "The 2030 Commonwealth Games will be held in India, and the country is making strong efforts to host the 2036 Olympics, with the aim of giving more and more players greater opportunities to compete," he said.

Modi highlighted flagship initiatives such as Khelo India and the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), describing them as game-changers in identifying talent and providing structured support to young athletes. "Through the Khelo India campaign, hundreds of youth have had the chance to advance to the national level," he noted, adding that a strong ecosystem was being built around scientific training, nutrition, funding and transparent selection. Pointing to India's rising stature in international sport, the Prime Minister said the country had hosted more than 20 major global events over the past 10 years, including the FIFA Under-17 World Cup, Hockey World Cups and major chess tournaments. This, he said, reflected a shift from earlier years when sports did not receive adequate attention from either government or society.

Modi also referred to ongoing reforms such as the proposed National Sports Governance Act and the Khelo Bharat Policy 2025, which he said would enhance transparency and ensure that the right talent gets opportunities while allowing youth to pursue sports alongside education.

Expressing satisfaction that Varanasi is emerging as a sporting destination, he said hosting the national volleyball championship was significant for the city. Drawing a parallel between volleyball and India's development journey, he remarked that teamwork, trust and shared responsibility were key to success—both on the court and in nation-building.

Bangladesh name 15-member T20 WC squad amid request to shift India matches

DHAKA

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Sunday announced a 15-member squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, with Litton Das continuing as captain, just hours after the country's sports ministry instructed it to seek shifting of Bangladesh's league matches from India to Sri Lanka citing player safety concerns.

The directive followed the release of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the IPL by Kolkata Knight Riders on the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) instructions, a move that triggered strong reactions in Dhaka. Government advisor Asif Nazrul subsequently asked the BCB to approach the ICC, headed by Jay Shah, requesting that Bangladesh's four group-stage matches be relocated.

Bangladesh are scheduled to play West Indies on February 7, Italy on February 9 and England on February 14 in Kolkata, before facing Nepal in Mumbai on February 17. The T20 World Cup is jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7 to March 8.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding venues, the BCB went ahead with the squad announcement. Taskin Ahmed returned to the side after missing the recent Ireland series and is expected to form the pace attack alongside Mustafizur Rahman, Tanzim Hasan Sakib and Shoriful Islam. All-rounder Md Shaifuddin and left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed were also included to strengthen the bowling unit.

"The Bangladesh Cricket Board has announced the national squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026," the BCB said in a statement on social media platform X.

A BCCI source, however, maintained that shifting matches at such a late stage would be extremely difficult, with less than a month remaining before the tournament begins. While the BCCI did not explicitly cite Bangladesh's internal political situation, it said the decision regarding Rahman was influenced by prevailing circumstances.

India recover from early wobble to take DLS win in series opener

Pangalia, Ambrish guide India U-19 to win over South Africa

BRIEF SCORES

India U-19 301 all out (Harvansh Pangalia 93, R.S. Ambrish 65; JJ Basson 4/54) beat South Africa U-19 148/4 in 27.4 overs (Jorich Van Schalkwyk 60*; Armaan Manack 46; Deepesh Devendran 2/33) by 25 runs (DLS).

BENONI (SOUTH AFRICA)

Prolific batter Harvansh Pangalia and R.S. Ambrish struck fluent half-centuries as India Under-19 overcame a shaky start to defeat South Africa Under-19 by 25 runs under the DLS Method in the opening Youth ODI.

Put in to bat, India U-19 were in early trouble after losing openers Vaibhav Suryavanshi (11) and Aaron George (5) cheaply. The visitors slipped further when wicketkeeper Abhigyan Kundu (21) and Vedant Trivedi (21) departed in quick succession, leaving India reeling at 67 for 4 in the 15th over.

Pangalia and Ambrish then steadied the innings with a well-paced recovery, initially focusing on rebuilding before accelerating with authority. The duo added a crucial 137 runs for the fifth wicket, turning the momentum decisively in India's favour. Pangalia narrowly missed out on a century, scoring a composed 93 off 95 balls, laced with seven fours and two sixes. Ambrish provided solid support with 65 off 79 deliveries, striking seven boundaries.

Late cameos from Kanishk Chouhan, who made a brisk 32 off 23 balls, and Khilan Patel, who smashed 26 off just 12 deliveries, helped India post an imposing 301 all out in 50 overs. South Africa's 17-year-old left-arm pacer JJ Basson was the standout bowler for the hosts, returning impressive figures of 4 for 54.

In reply, South Africa lost momentum early, slumping to 62 for 3 as right-arm pacer Deepesh Devendran struck twice. Jorich Van Schalkwyk anchored the chase with an unbeaten 60 off 72 balls, while Armaan Manack contributed 46 to keep the hosts in contention.

However, lightning and subsequent thundershowers interrupted play when South Africa were 148 for 4 in 27.4 overs. With conditions worsening, the match was decided by the DLS Method, handing India a 25-run victory and a 1-0 lead in the Youth ODI series.

Bangladesh seek shifting of T20 World Cup matches from India to SL

NEW DELHI

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has been directed by the country's sports ministry to formally ask the International Cricket Council (ICC) to shift Bangladesh's T20 World Cup league matches from India to Sri Lanka over player safety concerns. The move follows the release of pacer Mustafizur Rahman by IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders, despite him being bought for ₹9.20 crore, reportedly on instructions from the BCCI. The decision prompted an emergency BCB meeting, though president Aminul Islam Bulbul made no public comment.

Government advisor Asif Nazrul said Bangladesh cannot feel safe touring India if a contracted player is unable to play there, and confirmed the request to relocate matches. Bangladesh are scheduled to play West Indies, Italy and England in Kolkata, and Nepal in Mumbai. The tournament is jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7 to March 8. A BCCI source said relocating matches would be extremely difficult due to logistical challenges.

Steve Smith

bats away retirement talk as he keeps England guessing

SYDNEY

Australia captain Steve Smith has brushed aside speculation about his retirement, insisting he has no fixed timeline to end his illustrious career, while also keeping England guessing about Australia's team composition for the fifth and final Ashes Test. With veteran opener Usman Khawaja set to retire after the Sydney Test and off-spinner Nathan Lyon sidelined with injury, Smith, 36, will be the oldest player in the Australian XI alongside pacer Scott Boland. Asked whether he envisaged himself playing in the next Ashes series in England in 2027, Smith was deliberately non-committal, saying his focus remained firmly on the present.

"I'm taking it day-by-day, series-by-series, and we'll see where things land," said Smith, who has featured in 122 Tests and amassed more than 10,000 runs. "I feel like I'm doing alright, I'm enjoying my cricket, contributing and having fun. There's no real end date for me."

Smith acknowledged that with Khawaja stepping away, Australia would be losing a wealth of experience, and hinted that it would not be ideal for multiple senior players to exit at once. "With Usman dropping off, he's one of our experienced players. It probably wouldn't be ideal if both of us went out together," he said, adding, "I want to keep playing."

Khawaja, 39, announced his retirement on Friday, bringing to a close a Test career that began at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 2011, also against England. Smith paid tribute to his long-time teammate but declined to comment on Khawaja's remarks about alleged racial stereotyping during his career. "I'm not going into the mind of Usman Khawaja," Smith said, though he described criticism around Khawaja's injury before the Perth Test as unfair.

Looking ahead to the Sydney Test, Smith said Australia's final XI would depend heavily on the pitch conditions. "Everything's on the table. We could play a couple of all-rounders, a spinner, or no spinner at all," he said.

Australia lead the five-Test series 3-1, having already retained the Ashes, but Smith stressed there was still plenty to play for. "With World Test Championship points at stake, every game is important," he said.

Mohammed Shami's future under spotlight after another ODI snub

NEW DELHI

Mohammed Shami's absence from India's squad for the upcoming three-match ODI series against New Zealand has once again put the spotlight on the veteran fast bowler's future, with questions being raised about what more the seasoned campaigner needs to do to earn a recall.

Shami, who has not played international cricket since March 2025, was a notable omission despite recent strong performances in domestic cricket that suggested he had regained both rhythm and fitness. The 35-year-old Bengal pacer found himself edged out as selectors opted for a younger seam-bowling group led by Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Siraj, along with Harshit Rana, Prasidh Krishna and Nitish Kumar Reddy.

The continued snub has prompted debate among former cricketers, including ex-India seamer Irfan Pathan, who questioned the logic behind overlooking a bowler of Shami's pedigree. "The biggest talking point is Mohammed Shami. What is his future? He's not someone who came yesterday, played a few matches and left. He has taken 450-500 international wickets, which is a huge number," Pathan said on his YouTube channel.

Pathan acknowledged that fitness concerns had followed Shami since the end of the 2023 World Cup, when the pacer battled chronic pain. However, he argued that Shami's sustained workload for Bengal in domestic red- and white-ball tournaments should have addressed those doubts. "He has already bowled around 200 overs. After that, if fitness is still the question, then only the selection committee knows what more improvement is needed," Pathan said.

With the selectors seemingly focusing on the future, Shami's immediate pathway back into the national side may lie through the Indian Premier League. Now set to represent Lucknow Super Giants, the veteran will have a high-profile platform to remind everyone of his value.

"If I were him, I would go and play the IPL and create havoc," Pathan said. "The whole world watches the IPL. If you perform there, no one can ignore you. I believe his doors should not be closed."

Everyone will consider me a target, I must work harder: Minakshi embraces upcoming tests

CHENNAI

Reigning world champion Minakshi Hooda is clear that success has only raised the bar higher for her. After a path-breaking 2025, the 24-year-old Indian boxer says she is ready to face tougher challenges, aware that rivals will now view her as a marked opponent rather than an emerging contender. Minakshi begins her 2026 season at the Senior National Boxing Championships, at Gautam Buddha University in Greater Noida. Competing in the 48kg category, the top seed will open her campaign against Tamil Nadu's V Lakshaya S Viyayan as she bids to defend her national crown. "Last year I won big medals, but now everyone's eyes will be on me," Minakshi said. "People will consider me a target from now on, so I have to stay alert and work even harder. This is the time to consolidate, not relax."

The Haryana boxer has a packed calendar ahead, with major international events such as the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games lined up. While 48kg remains her immediate focus, Minakshi is also preparing for a possible shift to the 51kg category, as 48kg is not included in the CWG and Asian Games programme. A strong showing at the nationals — at least a final appearance — is crucial for her to earn a place in the national camp and build momentum for the transition. "For now, my focus is fully on the nationals," she said. "After that, we'll have camps and evaluations. Moving to 51kg will be tough because competition is stronger, but it's something I must do."

The year 2025 transformed Minakshi's career. She won the national title, followed it up with gold at the World Championships, and later claimed another gold at the World Boxing Cup in Greater Noida. Victories over elite opponents from China and Kazakhstan underlined her rise on the global stage.

Coming from a humble background as the daughter of an autorickshaw driver, Minakshi credits her coach Vijay Hooda for backing her when few believed in her dream. Her success has inspired girls in her village to take up boxing, a change she cherishes.

"Becoming world champion changed my life," she said. "But now the responsibility is bigger. I have to train even harder to stay at the top."

GARCIA UNFAZED BY HOSTILE ESPANYOL DERBY

Joan Garcia shines under pressure as late goals seal Barcelona's gritty derby victory

BARCELONA

Barcelona goalkeeper Joan Garcia delivered a commanding performance on his hostile return to Espanyol as the La Liga leaders clinched a dramatic 2-0 win in a fiery Catalan derby, thanks to two late goals set up by substitute Fermín López.

Garcia, who left Espanyol for city rivals Barcelona last summer, was the clear hero as he repelled wave after wave of attacks from the hosts, who dominated large spells of the contest. Despite relentless jeers from the home crowd and provocative banners aimed at him, the former Espanyol fan favourite remained unshaken, producing a string of superb saves to keep Barcelona level until the final minutes.

Espanyol came close repeatedly, with Pere Milla and Roberto Fernández forcing Garcia into action. His standout moment arrived in the 39th minute, when he instinctively tipped Milla's point-blank header over the crossbar with a one-handed reflex save. In the second half, Garcia denied Roberto on three occasions as Espanyol pressed hard for a deserved breakthrough.

With Espanyol tiring late on, Barcelona struck decisively. In the 86th minute, Fermín lofted a delicate pass over the defence for Dani Olmo, who finished with a deft lob over goalkeeper Marko Dimitrovic. Fermín then capped his impact by dribbling past his marker and squaring the ball for Robert Lewandowski to seal the win in stoppage time.

Barcelona coach Hansi Flick was effusive in his praise. "Espanyol played a fantastic game. We didn't deserve it," Flick admitted. "I have to say thank you to Joan Garcia. He was unbelievable and the clean sheet was his responsibility."

The defeat snapped Espanyol's five-match winning streak — their best run since the 1998-99 season — leaving coach Manolo González lamenting a missed opportunity. "Today was a day to win and we let it slip," he said.

The victory extended Barcelona's lead at the top to seven points ahead of Real Madrid. They next head to Saudi Arabia for the Spanish Super Cup, while Villarreal won to stay third and Valencia slipped closer to the relegation zone after another heavy loss.

Sadio Mané-inspired Senegal and Mali set up Africa Cup quarterfinal

RABAT

Mané leads by example as Senegal advance; resilient Mali survive shootout drama

Sadio Mané produced a captain's performance in all but name as Senegal booked their place in the Africa Cup of Nations quarterfinals with a 3-1 victory over Sudan, setting up a last-eight clash with Mali, who edged Tunisia in a tense penalty shootout.

With regular skipper Kalidou Koulibaly suspended, Mané shouldered the responsibility, chasing, pressing and creating chances throughout the contest in Tangier. The 2019 and 2022 African Footballer of the Year was instrumental in all three Senegal goals, inspiring the defending champions after an early scare. Sudan stunned the favourites in the sixth minute when Aamir Abdallah struck to give the Falcons of Jediane a shock lead. Senegal, however, responded with composure. Mané teed up Pape Gueye for the equaliser in the 29th minute, before Gueye struck again just before the break, this time assisted by Nicolas Jackson.

The Sudanese, who played their qualifiers away from home amid a devastating conflict in their country, showed admirable courage and commitment, but Senegal's quality eventually told. Substitute Ibrahim Mbaye, only 19, sealed the win in the 77th minute after Mané released him on the counter-attack.

"We needed to dig deep," said Senegal coach Pape Thiaw, praising his side's response to conceding early.

Earlier, Mali booked their quarterfinal spot after holding Tunisia to a 1-1 draw through extra time before prevailing 3-2 on penalties in Casablanca, despite playing most of the match with 10 men. Goalkeeper Djigui Diarra emerged as the hero, saving two spot-kicks after Mali missed twice in the shootout.

Tunisia had taken the lead late through Firas Chaouat, but Lassine Sinayoko equalised from the penalty spot in stoppage time after a foul by Yassine Meriah. Sinayoko also converted in the shootout as Mali overcame adversity to advance.

The quarterfinal between Senegal and Mali will be played in Tangier on January 9, promising a fierce West African showdown.

AIFF to confirm Indian Super League start date by next week

BENGALURU

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) is set to announce the commencement date of the long-delayed Indian Super League (ISL) by next week, following the submission of a report by its three-member coordination committee.

The report, prepared after extensive consultations with ISL clubs since December 22, was formally acknowledged by the AIFF Emergency Committee. "The report was formally acknowledged by the AIFF Emergency Committee, which recommended that the league be conducted by the AIFF," the federation said in a statement. According to the report, the panel has urged the federation to begin the season at the earliest, while simultaneously confirming the competition format and number of matches for what is expected to be a truncated campaign.

Declan Rice's brace sparks comeback as Arsenal move clear atop title race

Rice double helps Arsenal rally for win at Bournemouth, extend Premier League lead

BOURNEMOUTH

Declan Rice underlined his growing status as a Premier League player-of-the-season contender with a match-winning double that powered Arsenal to a dramatic 3-2 comeback victory over Bournemouth, opening up a six-point lead at the top of the table. The England midfielder, a late fitness call after a knee issue, proved decisive with two almost identical low, side-footed finishes in the second half. It marked the first time Rice has scored twice in a Premier League match and capped a performance that swung the contest firmly Arsenal's way.

Arsenal's afternoon began poorly when a loose pass from Gabriel Magalhaes was intercepted, allowing Evanilson to score into an empty net in the 10th minute. The Brazilian defender redeemed himself soon after, rifling home the equaliser following a mazy run by Noni Madueke, with Gabriel scoring in his second straight start since returning from injury.

Rice then took control after the break, arriving late into the box on two occasions to guide Arsenal into a 3-1 lead. Bournemouth substitute Eli Junior Kroupi reduced the deficit with a long-range strike in the 76th minute, setting up a nervy finale, but Mikel Arteta's side held firm to claim a fifth consecutive league win. "We're going to need everyone chipping in at different points, so I'm happy to help the team," Rice said after the match.

Arsenal's nearest challengers Aston Villa kept up the chase with a 3-1 win over Nottingham Forest, rebounding strongly from their heavy defeat by the leaders earlier in the week. Manchester City can move back into second place, four points adrift of Arsenal, with victory over Chelsea on Sunday. Elsewhere, Wolves finally ended their miserable start to the season with a 3-0 home win over West Ham. First-half goals from Jhon Arias, Hwang Hee-chan and Mateus Mané earned Wolves their first league victory, ending the worst winless start in Premier League history.

Bengaluru Open: Sumit Nagal drawn against Prajwal Dev in opening round

Top Indian faces Karnataka wildcard as locals avoid seeds at Bengaluru Open

BENGALURU

India's top-ranked singles player Sumit Nagal will begin his Bengaluru Open campaign against Karnataka wildcard Prajwal Dev after the main draw ceremony held at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium.

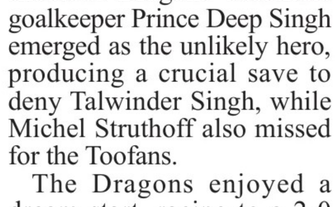
Nagal, currently ranked world No. 275, will take on Prajwal Dev (No. 629) in an all-Indian opening-round clash at the ATP Challenger 125 event, which marks the tournament's special 10th edition. The matches get underway from Monday.

Encouragingly for the home contingent, all six Indian players in the singles main draw avoided seeded opponents. Apart from Nagal and Prajwal, the Indian line-up includes Aryan Shah, Karan Singh, teenage prospect Manas Dhamne and Dhakshineswar Suresh. Top seed Pedro Martinez of Spain, ranked world No. 96 and a 2021 French Open semifinalist, will open his campaign against a qualifier.

Six Indians will also feature in the qualifying rounds, competing among 24 players for six available main-draw spots. Experienced campaigners such as Ramkumar Ramanathan, Sidharth Rawat and Manish Sureshkumar will be among those aiming to progress. The doubles draw, too, promises strong Indian representation. Top seeds N Sriram Balaji and Austria's Neil Oberleitner face the Ukrainian-Finnish pair of Vladyslav Orlov and Eero Vasa in the first round. Veteran Saketh Myneni teams up with Adil Kalyanpur as a wildcard pairing and will meet Sumit Nagal and Lloyd Harris in their opener. In all, 13 Indians are competing in the doubles event, including Karnataka's Niki Poonacha. Despite being the best hope for home fans, Nagal enters the tournament with some concerns over form, having slipped significantly in the ATP rankings in 2025. He could face second seed Harold Mayot in the second round if he advances. However, the 28-year-old remained unfazed.

"I am not getting too ahead of myself," Nagal said. "For me, it's one day at a time and match by match."

Youngster Aryan Shah, the second-highest-ranked Indian at No. 329, will face Kazakhstan's Beibit Zhukayev in his first-ever singles main-draw appearance at the Bengaluru Open, calling the opportunity "really special" after missing out last year.



Men's HIL: Dragons scrape past Toofans in shootout opener

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Dragons held their nerve in a tense shootout to defeat Hyderabad Toofans 4-2 after an entertaining 3-3 draw in regulation time, marking a dramatic start to the Men's Hockey India League at the SDAT–Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium.

Midfielder Mohammed Raheel sealed the win for the home side, showing remarkable composure as he waited for goalkeeper Jean-Paul Danneburg to commit before calmly slotting the ball home in the shootout. Dragons' substitute goalkeeper Prince Deep Singh emerged as the unlikely hero, producing a crucial save to deny Talwinder Singh, while Michel Struthoff also missed for the Toofans.

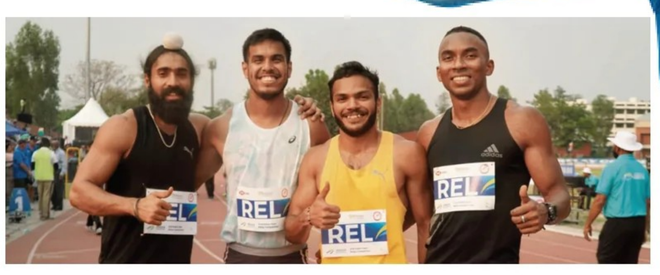
The Dragons enjoyed a dream start, racing to a 2-0 lead inside the first quarter. Uttam Singh opened the scoring with a neat deflection from a penalty-corner variation before Thomas Sorsby dazzled the crowd with a scintillating 25-yard solo run, finishing emphatically past the goalkeeper.

Hyderabad responded through drag-flick specialist Amandeep Lakra, who kept his side in the contest with two precise penalty-corner conversions. With Gonzalo Peillat sidelined due to injury, the 23-year-old Amandeep stepped up admirably, underlining the Toofans' strength in set pieces.

The hosts regained the lead in the third quarter when striker Selvam Karthi pounced on a loose ball to score opportunistically. However, Toofans defender Arthur De Sloover restored parity soon after with a superb strike from a tight angle that caught Dragons' first-choice goalkeeper David Harte by surprise.

AFI sets steep 10.16s qualification mark for Asian Games 100m

BENGALURU



The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has set an exceptionally high benchmark for men's 100m qualification for the Asian Games, to be held in September–October in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, effectively asking Indian sprinters to break the national record to secure a berth.

According to the standards released, athletes will need to clock 10.16 seconds to qualify for the individual 100m event. This is faster than the current national record of 10.18s, set by Animesh Kujur last year. As a result, leading sprinters such as Kujur and Karnataka's Manikanta Hoblidhar, whose personal best stands at 10.19s, will have to raise their performance levels further to make the cut. AFI officials justified the stringent mark, pointing to the quality of competition at the continental level. At the 2022 Asian Games, the gold medal in the men's 100m was won with a time of 9.97s, while the slowest podium finish came at 10.11s, underlining the need for Indian athletes to be competitive at the very top. The men's 4x100m relay qualification standard has also been set high at 38.81s. India's current national record of 38.69s, achieved last April by a quartet including Amlan Borgohain and Gurindervir Singh, suggests depth in the sprint ranks, though consistency will be key. In contrast, qualification standards for several other events are relatively more achievable.

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